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MAO TUN AND THE LITERATURE OF  
SMALL NATIONS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLES

ABSTRACT

HILARY CHUNG

This study presents an examination of the critical writings of Mao Tun contributed to the Hsiao-shuo Yue-pao (Short Story Monthly) from 1920 to 1929. Firstly, it follows the development of his ideas on literature through the decade, from his original preference for neo-romantic literature, as a synthesis of romanticism and realism, via his advocacy of realism, in response to the deficiencies he perceived within the internal literary scene, to his eventual espousal of proletarian socialist realistic literature - in his own interpretation. Thus an essential context is provided in which to study his work of translation and introduction of foreign literature, and the reciprocal exchange of influence between this work and his evolving literary views.

The investigation which follows makes special reference to the literature of four representative peoples: the Poles, the Hungarians, the Norwegians and the Jews. Mao Tun's concern with the relevance of the social background in which the literature of oppressed peoples was written for the development of a new Chinese literature is also examined. Finally, Mao Tun's perception of the fundamental shortcomings of a large proportion of contemporary Chinese literature, and the remedial measures for which he called, are explored in the light of his study of these 'small and oppressed' literatures.

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MAO TUN AND THE LITERATURE OF  
SMALL NATIONS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLES

An examination of the works contributed to the  
Hsiao-shuo Yue-pao by Mao Tun from 1920 to 1929  
with particular reference to his treatment of the  
literature of small nations and oppressed peoples,  
in the light of his own literary concerns.

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1986



19 JUN 1987

Thesis  
1986/CHU

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DEDICATION

To : Don Starr without whose encouragement this thesis  
would still be a vague idea - with fond thanks.

And to : my husband Minh Chung for his love and continual  
support despite his own on-going studies.

Thanks also to typists Norma and Karen.

## NOTES ON THE TEXT

- 1) All translations are my own except where indicated.
- 2) The Chinese term 'chu-i' (主義) has been predominantly translated as 'ism' despite stylistic concerns, because it is felt that this better reflects the contemporary debate where the practice of 'extreme nominalism' was prevalent.
- 3) Although the pseudonym 'Mao Tun' was not used in HSYP until the publication of his first creative work in late 1927, it is used throughout this study because this is the name by which he is best known.
- 4) The romanization used throughout is Wade-Giles, modified in the case of a few common place names.
- 5) Abbreviations Used  
  
HSYP      Hsiao-shuo Yue-pao  
            The Short Story Monthly  
            (edited by Mao Tun 1920-1922)  
  
JOSA      Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia  
  
AAS(B)    Asian and African Studies (Bratislava)
- 6) The responsibility for all errors is completely my own.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In Prof. Prušek's article 'Quelques Remarques sur la Nouvelle Littérature Chinoise', there appears the following statement:

'Si nous voulons déterminer l'importance et la place qu'occupe une oeuvre littéraire dans le cadre du développement historique, il faut l'examiner dans ses rapports avec trois domaines: d'abord avec le réel, ensuite avec la tradition littéraire du pays en question, enfin avec la littérature mondiale.'

In its examination of Mao Tun's critical writing in HSYP during the decade of the 1920s, the present study also orientates itself around these three areas. Chapter two examines the development of Mao Tun's views on the function of literature, as expressed in this journal, from his original preference for neoromantic literature to his eventual espousal of something approaching proletarian socialist realist literature, by way of realism. Chapter four investigates Mao Tun's perception of the contemporary literary scene and his criticism of the way in which this was still extensively bound by traditionalism and classicism. Chapter three studies the motivating factors in Mao Tun's work of translation and introduction of foreign literature, particularly the literature of 'small and oppressed nations', contemporary interest in which was largely inspired by his efforts.

Mao Tun became editor of HSYP in 1920 when it was still a leading organ of the popular 'Butterfly' literature, as it had been since 1910.<sup>2</sup>



At the time of Mao Tun's arrival HSYF carried various sections, including 'Miscellany', 'Plays', 'Lyrics', 'Essays', 'Gossip from abroad', 'Travel Notes' and 'Fiction Club', all seemingly little of substance. He immediately initiated an additional section entitled 'The New Tide of Fiction' which sought to introduce to the readership of HSYF works of a superior nature. For example in the January issue of 1920 there appeared a discussion of modern Russian literature, and an announcement of the death of Andreyev as well as the article 'A Criticism of the Compromise between Old and New Literature' and the 'Manifesto of the Column of the New Tide of Fiction', all by Mao Tun. During the year this new section gradually increased in size, swollen not only by articles but also by translations of works by such Western writers as Maupassant, Ibsen and Chekhov, and by creative works. However it was not until December 1920 that members of the newly formed Society for Literary Studies (文學研究會) completely took over control of the journal from the 'Butterfly' group. Their 'Manifesto of Reform' appeared in the following month's issue announcing a total reorganisation. There were to be new columns all incorporating the ideas of the new literature movement and the manifesto of the Society:<sup>3</sup>

'Discussion and Criticism' (論評), 'Research' (研究), 'Collected Translation' (譯叢), 'Creative Work' (創作) as well as special features and articles.<sup>4</sup> Although E. Perry Link writes of a certain tendency during the 1920s towards the displacement of Butterfly writers from prominent positions and the challenge of their leadership of the literary scene by May Fourth writers,<sup>5</sup> it still seems that the Commercial Press took an enormous gamble in allowing this take-over to go ahead. When considered in terms of circulation and readership numbers this decision is all the more momentous, as it must

have been feared that the re-vamped HSYF would lose its popular appeal and attract a select readership of intellectuals and students instead. Nevertheless there is no doubt that the Commercial Press lost nothing in prestige through its decision.

The excitement of the challenge which faced the twenty-five year-old editor and his new team of contributors is apparent from the outset when they boldly announced their proposals for reform. Not only did they not wish to betray the trust of the Commercial Press, but the responsibilities of guiding the HSYF in this radically new direction while retaining its readership were also formidable. Mao Tun in particular worked tirelessly. M. Gálík has calculated that from 1921 to 1922 'his publications in journals alone comprised no less than 164 major articles, essays ..., translations ...',<sup>6</sup> in addition he also had administrative and editorial duties to perform.

After two years of superhuman effort, Mao Tun was obliged to step down as editor-in-chief, to be replaced by Cheng Chen-to (鄭振鐸). Among other periodicals published by the Commercial Press were journals devoted to 'Butterfly' literature, and it was felt that Mao Tun's increasingly strongly-worded attacks on this type of literature in HSYF, notably in the articles 'Naturalism and Modern Chinese Fiction', and also 'Reaction?' were not politic. He worked for two years in the department of Old Chinese Literature in the Commercial Press,<sup>7</sup> before becoming actively involved in the Northern Expedition and communist activities in Wuhan. After these were crushed he eventually returned to Shanghai, living a lonely existence in hiding from the Kuomintang police, and writing his trilogy. For reasons which are

generally thought to have been both political and personal<sup>8</sup> Mao Tun spent the following two years from 1928 to 1930 in Japan, from where he continued to contribute to HSYP and other periodicals. His return to China and his activities in association with the League of Left-Wing Writers during the following decade are another chapter of his life and work beyond the scope of this study. In any case his relations with the Commercial Press and HSYP were abruptly severed in 1932 when, after the Shanghai Incident, the offices of the former were destroyed by the invading Japanese.<sup>9</sup>

The decision to restrict investigations largely to HSYP was considered expedient in the execution of a one year M.A. thesis. Although a comprehensive analysis of Mao Tun's critical works was thereby precluded - in any case this would not have been a viable proposition for a single year's work - such a decision has enabled a more thorough examination of individual articles, and facilitated a chronological approach. The choice of HSYP for particular study was motivated by the appeal of its somewhat audacious take-over by the members of the Society for Literary Studies, and also by the large number of contributions by Mao Tun on the subject of foreign literature, particularly the literature of 'small and oppressed peoples', which it carried, and which constitute the primary interest of this study. A further consideration is the availability of HSYP, which has been recently reprinted by Shu-mu Wen-hsien Ch'u-pan-she (書目文獻出版社) for the period 1921 - 1928.

The work of translation and introduction of foreign literature by the Chinese during the early part of the twentieth century is usually

approached from the perspective of the literature of a particular country or countries, commonly providing a general overview. If the work of an individual translator is singled out for particular study, reference to his translation work is commonly made in the context of his critical or creative work (as in this era translators were usually also writers or critics), rather than being treated in its own right. The case of Mao Tun is a case in point, for the almost exhaustive and excellent studies of his critical and ideological development by M. Gálik only make passing reference to this area of his work. However, Mao Tun's position in this field is an important one which deserves further investigation. During his time as editor, he was the motivating force behind the orientation of HSYF towards the translation of foreign works and the introduction of foreign authors, especially those treated in this study. Indeed, his views on a particular topic often became the standard view, even if, as exceptionally occurred with his misunderstanding of the position of Yiddish within Jewish literature, those original views were misconceived.

In order to place Mao Tun's work of translation and introduction in its ideological context, it was first necessary to undertake a summary of the development of his critical views. The approach adopted was a chronological one. It was necessary to be able to pinpoint the state of his thinking at a particular time as an influential factor in his choice and treatment of an individual foreign author. This is in contrast to M. Gálik whose primary concern is ideological, and whose purpose is better served by making simultaneous reference to various articles written at different times, in an order dictated by the direction of his investigations. The approach of this study allows a more ordered and complete appraisal of individual articles, and where

some of the rather more well-known ones have already been investigated by others, their inclusion here is felt to be justified both by the different approach of this study, and by their necessary place in its overall scheme. At the same time equal prominence and treatment is given to less well-known articles. With regard to Mao Tun's practice of arbitrarily labelling prominent Western literary figures according to his own conceptions, the concern of this study is not the literary critical debate which this practice might inspire so much as Mao Tun's own understanding of such figures, as this is relevant to other areas of his work.

Since Mao Tun's evaluation of the contemporary Chinese literary scene is, if examined at all, generally investigated in a way similar to the treatment of his translation work, described above, it was also considered worthwhile to study this aspect of his work in its own right.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHICH - ISM?

The purpose of this chapter is to follow chronologically the development of Mao Tun's views on the aims and function of literature as this is reflected in his articles in HSYP. Because the object of this study is limited to Mao Tun's contributions to HSYP, the intention is not to present a comprehensive analysis as this would not be possible without recourse to a number of important articles in other periodicals and journals.<sup>1</sup> However the more limited scope allows a more thorough analysis of individual articles. Furthermore, material in HSYP does provide a good reflection of the basic direction in which his ideas moved during the decade, an understanding of which is essential as the criterion by which all judgements regarding the future of Chinese literature and the introduction of foreign literature were made by Mao Tun.

In 'Mélanges de Sinologie', J. Prušek wrote of Mao Tun:

'... il s'agit du plus érudit des critiques et théoriciens chinois de la littérature, plus familiarisé aux courants littéraires européens que quiconque de ses contemporains.'<sup>2</sup>

Such an observation is evidenced by Mao Tun's first contribution to HSYP at the age of twenty-four years, 'Manifesto of the Column of the New Tide of Fiction',<sup>3</sup> which, with Mao Tun writing as the new editor, heralded the beginnings of the reform of the journal. In the first part of the article Mao Tun indicated his belief in literary evolution, and its direct relevance for China:

"... Western fiction has already progressed from Romanticism\* to Realism\*, Symbolism\* and New Romanticism\*; however we in China still remain at a stage before realism, and this is simply following in the footsteps of others. Therefore the work of introducing the fiction of the new schools (新派) is now very urgent." 4

As has been widely pointed out, such an evaluation of the position of Chinese literary development is directly reminiscent of Ch'en Tu-hsiu's (陳獨秀) article of November 1915 in 'New Youth', 'A Discussion of the History of Modern European Literature',<sup>5</sup> and his reply to a reader's enquiry a month later, stating that 'Chinese literature still remains in the stage of classicism and romanticism. Hereafter it will tend to realism'.<sup>6</sup> The importance of the inclusion of China within the evolutionary framework of world literature is discussed in the following chapter, in relation to the introduction of foreign literature. In this article Mao Tun continued:

"Literature belongs to the realm of thought, this is certainly true, but in its structure literature is completely dependent on art. Where a topic is portrayed by the naturalistic school it becomes naturalistic literature, where the same topic is portrayed by the mystic school it becomes mystic literature; through this we can understand that if one wishes to create a new literature, one's thinking is definitely essential and artistic concerns can no less be ignored. If one's thinking is able to push rigorously ahead, a thousand miles in a day (一日千里) but one's art has a weak foundation, then one will not be successful. This is because the beautification of art is always on the basis of old models. Not to probe the old preconceptions and proceed in order, but rather to imitate only what is new (探本窮源) in a headstrong manner is not a viable course of action. Therefore novels of the new schools must be introduced in China, starting with realism and naturalism." 7

This quotation indicates the equal importance Mao Tun accorded to both ideological and aesthetic concerns in literature. M. Gálík suggests that:

'... Mao Tun is convinced of an extremely quick adaptability of systems of thought in relation to the human receptor; on

\* English supplied in the original text



the other hand he is aware of the fact that to appreciate the artistic aspect of a work or at least to perceive it adequately requires a process of longer duration.'

8

It also appears to be a warning against disregarding aesthetic concerns in the attempt to create a new literature, implying that the ideology of the newest trends was being followed without a corresponding effort in the field of aesthetics.<sup>9</sup> Thus specific attention should be paid to both spheres in the introduction of realism and naturalism.

In terms of literary evolution, of course, the introduction of foreign realistic and naturalistic works into China would provide the means for Chinese literature to progress to the next stage of literary development. Mao Tun's faith in literary evolution remained with him until the latter part of the decade, however his advocacy of its principles in relation to the creation of a new literature seems to be without any literary -ism in mind. China had to catch up with the West, but in a way that would avoid "following in the footsteps of others". Later in the article Mao Tun returned to this pre-occupation with the question of literary evolution:

"... to translate more literature which investigates problems is indeed a medicine for contemporary society and the daring vanguard in the propagation of new thought; yet this is [a] rather one-sided [approach]. Only to translate the new rather loses sight of the course of literary evolution."

10

In the following paragraph he drew an analogy with the study of philosophy:

"Anyone who is working with philosophy, without having previously studied the history of philosophy, without having read the works of older and modern philosophers, and who is not able to say anything about the ontology of the different authors of the past, cannot know anything about the present-day state of research, he cannot know what is meant by the theory of value or epistemology; if he studies only the recent teachings he

will only attain common knowledge, but it will not be research."

11

Mao Tun explained that the same held good for literature and provided the following summary:

"Western classical literature was destroyed by Rousseau, and Romanticism was brought to an end by Ibsen. Naturalism began with Zola, Symbolism was founded by Maeterlink, and at the present time there is New Romanticism."

12

He considered the time of Rousseau a time of liberation and of emphasis on subjective description, this was followed by

"... a change to objectivity and then a further movement back to subjectivity, however it was not the same type of subjectivity as before: thus in the progress of evolution it is impossible to soar upwards in one step."

13

A. Tagore writes of the 'total acceptance of "science" as the panacea of all human problems',<sup>14</sup> among Chinese intellectuals. When applied to art, after the Western fashion, this type of rather simplistic overview often resulted. Nevertheless a basic general understanding of the scheme of Western literary evolution is revealed here which adequately justifies the call for the introduction of realistic and naturalistic literature. Further justification provided by Mao Tun was that the newest trends of mysticism, symbolism and aestheticism could not be understood by ordinary people.<sup>15</sup> He was later to write of the necessity for a "baptism of naturalism", as we shall see.

Bonnie McDougall writes:

'The main function of the evolutionary theory for Chinese writers was to explain shifts in literary ideology (to a lesser extent in technique and genres) in modern Western literature ... The belief in the forward progress of literature, narrowly interpreted, led among other things to a general lack of interest in the classical, medieval and neo-classical literature in the West.'

16

There was also a widespread rejection of classical Chinese literature among the iconoclastic new generation, but in 1920 Mao Tun expressed a very balanced view:

"That which is newest is not necessarily the most beautiful or the best. Any new thing carries the background colour of the age, something which fits a particular period is new in that period only, but this is not the case with the concepts of beauty and excellence. These concepts are realities, their true value does not vary in accordance with the age. Old literature also contains that which is beautiful and good, we cannot totally write it off. Therefore we must not discriminate against old or new literature; we believe that at this present time of the creation of a new Chinese art, Western literature and old Chinese literature are both a certain amount of help. However we do not intend only to seek to preserve the old, and not to strive for the progressive, we intend to use the old as research material, to lift out its special characteristics (特質), to combine them with the special characteristics of Western literature, and further, to create a new literary language in its own right. We now close this column [by declaring] the intention not to rashly 'copy from Europe' (摹歐). Our hope is that everyone will understand, and will rigorously advance with this intention as a basis." 17

Already in 1920 Mao Tun revealed his perceptive attitude towards the evaluation of the literature of past ages, recognizing that such works should be judged according to the criteria pertaining to the particular epoch, and also recognizing eternal values of 'beauty' (美) and 'excellence' (好) which transcend chronological criteria. In the years immediately following, this attitude, in a more developed form, in accordance with the general development of Mao Tun's literary views, was put into practice when he carried out a great deal of introduction and translation work. (See Chapter 3, pp. 144-5).

By stating the intention "not to strive for the progressive" (不求進步), Mao Tun implicitly indicated his acceptance of the fact that Chinese literature would remain markedly behind Western developments, if the course action he advocated were followed. However, to emphasize that 'newest' does not necessarily equal 'best' suggests that at this time he did not accept the commonly held belief in contemporary China in the capacity of literature for gradual and

continual self-perfection. In another context, Bonnie McDougall has suggested that Mao Tun, as the new editor of HSYF, may not have wished to reveal certain of his aims.<sup>18</sup> It is certainly possible that Mao Tun did not wish to force too much upon his unenlightened readership at one time, and that he felt that to express a preference for some form of post-realistic literature, whilst at the same time advocating a general drive to introduce realistic works would be confusing.

A further noteworthy feature of this section is the clearly stated intention to "create a new literary language in its own right". Too often in later articles, this aspect of the creation of a new literature seems to have been taken for granted. Nevertheless, even though the pai hua (白話) debate had subsided somewhat because the principle had been accepted, the work to establish a new literary language in its own right was still very much an on-going process. This concern is discussed further in the following chapter with particular reference to the importance of translation work as an opportunity for experimentation within the new literary language.

Also evident in this article are two problems which recur regularly in subsequent articles. The first refers to the over-use of 'period terms' such as 'naturalism', 'realism', etc. without adequate definition, which René Wellek has described as 'the extreme nominalism which considers them mere arbitrary linguistic labels'.<sup>19</sup> M. Galik has pointed this out and further adds that it was because Mao Tun drew extensively from English and American sources, among which this practice was particularly characteristic, that he too

adopted it.<sup>20</sup> The second is the confusion of the two terms 'naturalism' and 'realism'. In this article, as Bonnie McDougall notes, 'he did not distinguish between [the two] except to indicate that [naturalism] was developed by Zola'.<sup>21</sup> His use of the two terms in later articles will be discussed before any conclusions are drawn.

Mao Tun returned to the discussion of the place of old Chinese literature within the creation of a new literature in a second short article in the same issue entitled 'A Criticism of the Compromise between Old and New Literature'. In this article, he rejected the middle path advocated by the 'compromise party' that wen yen (文言) be used for works of beauty (美文) whilst pai hua (白話) be used for popular exposition, asserting that the former could be written in pai hua too.<sup>22</sup>

Mao Tun continued:

"I believe that new literature is literature which has evolved. This literature has three essential elements, firstly, its universal nature, secondly the ability to express human life and to develop human life, thirdly it is literature for the common people, not any privileged class. Precisely because it should have a universal nature, we must write in the vernacular; because it emphasizes the expression of life and the development of life, we must emphasize ideology rather than form; because it is literature for the common people we must have a spirit of humanism and an atmosphere of brightness and vividness."

23

This is Mao Tun's first attempt in HSYF to define the character of the new literature. His advocacy of universality in literature and the use of the vernacular as a literary language indicates a complete rejection of the elitism of Chinese classical literature. Also, this has links, by implication, with the issue of popular literacy and

education, a relationship which is particularly evident in the literature of the 'small and oppressed nations' in Europe, to which Mao Tun devoted particular attention during his years as editor. The third 'element' carries this a stage further: universal literature is literature for the common people. As such not only should it express compassion for one's fellow men but present an optimistic view of life, a "bright and vivid" image to inspire him. Such a conception of the nature of literature extends beyond the bounds of realism, as is expressed in Mao Tun's second point. Wellek defines realism, in simple terms, as 'the objective representation of contemporary social reality',<sup>24</sup> where an 'objective representation' is understood to mean the lack of any express intention on the part of the author to indulge in fantasy, or moralizing, whether or not the work may be judged by others to be totally non-didactic. Wellek's definition further depends on what is meant by 'reality'. In historical terms this implies a description of life as it is despite all its misery and decrepitude. However at this time Mao Tun's conceptions were not bound by such limitations. His belief that literature should "express human life" is the first expression in HSYP of a conviction which remained with him. Yet he continued by stating that literature should guide life's future development. This reveals enormous faith in the power of literature, no less so when there is absolutely no doubt that the future will be "vivid and bright".

In his article 'Chou Tso-jen (周作人) and cultivating one's garden',<sup>25</sup> David Pollard shows Chou Tso-jen to have similar intentions:

'There are two courses to pursue ...

(1) to describe the ideal life, that which men are capable of achieving; and

(2) to describe 'human' life, or life as it is usually led.' 25

However, whilst Mao Tun gave priority to the latter, Chou's emphasis lay in a different direction :

'The first course would be direct, the second would be oblique, but the goal would be the same. Literature which describes 'inhuman' life may still be 'human' depending on the attitude of the author.'

26

That which Chou Tso-jen termed 'inhuman life' Mao Tun termed 'human life', thus, although Mao Tun felt that an expression of life should be tinged with idealism, showing something of a post-realistic orientation, his concern was to work from contemporary life as it was, recognizing it as human. Chou did not seem to accept contemporary life as worthy of the epithet 'human'. His concern was rather on a higher plane, with the potential of the human condition.

Mao Tun stressed the importance of ideology over form. In the previous article, in the context of the efforts necessary to create a new literature, he urged that neither the field of ideology nor aesthetics should be neglected. This second article is primarily concerned with the rejection of classical literary convention and formalism, therefore the force of this preference for ideology is to suggest that good art does not have to be written in accordance with strict formulae.

According to Mao Tun, good art is art which incorporates these three essential elements. Although previously he clearly asserted that the newest in art is not necessarily the most desirable, he took the word 'new' to mean precisely this when he wrote:

"... We should use the concept of evolution to explain what is 'new' and should not use the era as a criterion. That which is old or new is determined by nature (性質), not by form (形式)."

27

This statement relates directly to the preceding article: 'beauty' and 'excellence' are eternal values which can be possessed by works from various eras; the three elements of literature which has evolved are the criteria Mao Tun provided by which to determine the value of a particular work. Thus nature, specifically 'beauty' and 'excellence', transcends chronological criteria for judgement, but form is bound by the epoch.

Mao Tun's post-realistic orientation is clearly expressed in a short editorial entitled 'Should we now promote symbolistic literature?',<sup>28</sup> in the following issue. It also reveals a departure from his position vis à vis the place of Chinese literature in the scheme of literary evolution expressed a month earlier. He began by describing the inability of Chinese to understand the concept of symbolism, and their lack of effort to attempt to understand this concept, which had never truly existed in China:

"Chinese people do not seek to understand the way in which wrong conclusions can be drawn by false analogy - this is clear."

29

The second part of this editorial seeks to explain why they should seek to understand it. He first made it clear that as he had already outlined the nature of symbolism in an article in the journal 'Study Lamp', he did not intend to repeat himself, but would rather concentrate on the question of whether symbolism should be promoted in China at that time. This Mao Tun did in a series of questions and answers.

"Q: Realism attacks the roots of the decay of our evil society with fervour, it is strong revolutionary literature. Because symbolism cannot attain these heights, should we not promote realism?

A: I accept this but we have already promoted realism for over a year and the roots of the evils of society have been extensively exposed, but what reaction has there been? It is



evident that people in the present society are in a state of such confusion and trouble that one dose of medicine by itself is not enough to cure them. We should advance simultaneously along several paths."

30

To advance simultaneously along more than one path does not adhere to the evolutionary scheme, where an advanced stage cannot be attained before the preceding stages have been experienced. Mao Tun explained the need to proceed in this way in terms of the chronic condition of Chinese society which required emergency treatment. However, in the context of the following paragraph this is obviously not a rejection of evolutionary theory. Rather, it appears to suggest a tension between Mao Tun's aesthetic preference as a potential creative writer for post-realistic literature, and his responsibility as a critic to advocate that which best suited the immediate requirements of Chinese literature. This is borne out in the answer to the next question which reveals aesthetic dissatisfaction with realism:

"Q: After promoting symbolism, how great will the immediate effect be?

A: Naturally there will not necessarily be one. But we must understand the short-coming of realism: it makes people depressed and lacking in hope, and it over-stimulates people's emotions. From the point of view of spiritual vitality (精神) it is unbalanced, thus we advocate symbolism with this in mind. Furthermore the momentum of neoromanticism is daily increasing, which can assuredly guide man to the right path, and give him the ability not to lose hope. We must definitely take this path, but first we must make preparations. Symbolism is the continuation after realism, the course through which to reach neoromanticism. Therefore we must promote it."

31

Once again Mao Tun expressed the necessity that literature should extend beyond the simple expression of life and should inspire hope in the future. Furthermore he suddenly introduced the term 'neoromanticism', without any definition, as the ultimate "right path". Yet his belief in the correctness of following the course of evolution is unwavering as he insisted upon the preparatory stages of realism and

symbolism, before neo-romanticism might be attained. There is no indication that this course of development should be allowed to proceed organically, after the model of the West. On the contrary, the chronic condition of Chinese society seemed to demand the intervention of the critics to decide somewhat arbitrarily how long a particular literary movement should be allowed to flower in China before the seeds of the next one should be sown. It appears that it was also the critic who had his finger on the world literary pulse, and who therefore sensed the increasing momentum of the latest development in the direction of the mainstream of literature. He could then present China with the longer term goal for which she had to aim. However, that Mao Tun advocated the promotion of post-realistic literary trends does not necessarily indicate that these were his ultimate preference. At this time his faith seems rather to have been in literary evolutionism itself. Thus the question to which this editorial addresses itself is not whether or not symbolism should be promoted, but when.

Mao Tun maintained this vagueness with regard to the various literary 'isms' into 1921. Part of the 'Manifesto of Reform' ( 改革宣言 ), which announced the complete change in the direction of HSYP under the editorship of Shen Yen-ping (i.e. Mao Tun), reads as follows:

Recently realistic literature has already gone into decline, so it seems that from a world perspective it ought not to be promoted so much. However as far as the situation of the country's internal literary scene is concerned, we have not yet experienced even a miniscule amount of the true spirit of realism and the true masterpieces of realistic literature, so members feel that there is still a definite need for the introduction of realism today. At the same time we must also fulfil our quota of literature which is not realistic, in order that a further level of preparation can be reached." -

It is generally assumed that Mao Tun was the author of this 'Manifesto'.<sup>33</sup> The views expressed here certainly recall the editorial on symbolism, however the emphasis has shifted to the introduction of realistic works as the main aim, although the importance of raising the level of preparation, presumably for China's entry into neo-romantic literature, is still recognized. Thus the expedient of simultaneous advancement along several paths is by implication still considered acceptable. The 'Manifesto' also expressed the need for critics:

"Our country simply does not possess that which is called criticism; since there are no fixed standards, ideas of good and bad are mostly formed according to the personal opinions of the individual; members also hold to the precept that 'there must first be critics, then there will be real writers'... Thus members all strongly recognize the importance of the free creative spirit; although keen to promote criticism, they are not willing to become slaves to -isms. Moreover, we certainly do not want our fellow countrymen to uphold the principles of Western literary criticism as though they were sacred laws and end up killing off the spirit of free creativity."

34

The importance of critics to establish standards is implied in the discussion of the question of the introduction of symbolism above. However, the noble intention expressed here of not becoming "slaves to -isms" and of fostering the spirit of free creativity sits uneasily beside the stated intention to learn from the West and follow the Western course of evolutionary development. It remained to be seen whether the fine line between free creativity within guidelines and rigorous adherence to imported literary theories would be breached.

A certain wariness of the enslaving power of literary -isms is also apparent in the article 'The relationship of literature to man and the old Chinese misconception of the writer's position', in the

same issue. But it began with an evaluation of the traditional Chinese attitude towards literature and literary men. The latter in Mao Tun's opinion were regarded as "poetic courtiers" (詞賦之臣), "ornaments representing prosperity and peace" (粉飾太平的奢侈品) or "jesters" (弄臣).<sup>35</sup> The ancient understanding of the function of literature in Mao Tun's evaluation was either as a vehicle to "convey the tao" (文以載道), "to propagandize the way of the ancient philosophers and sages", or as "entertainment" (消遣), "an amusement for periods of elation or something with which to while away the time in periods of depression."<sup>36</sup> This is proof enough of the contention made in the 'Manifesto' regarding the complete absence of "that which is called literary criticism" in Chinese literary history. In the light of these observations Mao Tun then proceeded to embark upon the question which was to preoccupy him greatly, namely:

"Why has a Chinese national literature hitherto not been established, and why has it not been able to develop in the same way as [in] all Western countries?"

37

His answer identified a fundamental short-coming:

"It is because hitherto we have not recognized the relationship between literature and man and have not understood the role of writers within a country's culture that we have reached the present situation."

38

The remedy was to be found within the course of world literary evolution. He stressed the universal application of this, to the literary history of any country, and noted four concepts which the Chinese had failed to discover:

"... they [i.e. the West] discovered something called individuality (個性) and in sequence they further discovered society (社會), nation (國家) and people (民衆), therefore their literature evolved to its present stage."

39

He divided the course of world literary evolution into three stages:

"individualist (of ancient times), imperial (of the middle ages) and

Mass (of the contemporary age)",<sup>40</sup> and further stated that whilst both China and the West had passed through the first two stages, China's position was at that time between stage two and stage three.

"We must begin to catch up in the shortest time, for how can we accept self-denigration?"

41

In order not to work in total isolation, it is useful to make a comparison with another prominent critic of the time, in the context of world literary evolution. The views of Chou Tso-jen make an interesting comparison. As Chou was a fellow contributor to HSYF and a fellow founder-member of the Society for Literary Studies, this in itself indicates a certain similarity of views on literature, in general terms. However on many specific issues their views differed greatly. In the article under discussion Mao Tun stated that the aim of literature was the expression of life,<sup>42</sup> and although his ideas underwent considerable changes over the years this fundamental precept remained with him. For Chou Tso-jen, 'The conviction ... that the aim of art is self-expression is one which Chou has held, in face of much opposition, throughout his life'.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, Chou's conception of literary evolution necessarily differed from that of Mao Tun, in order to substantiate this view:

'The thesis is that literature should be individual according to the pattern of history: literature was once of mankind, then of class, now of individual. In ancient times the ballads expressed simple aspirations that were held in common; now the man of advanced sensibility expresses things ignored or felt indistinctly by people, but these are still common experiences. The individual is ... the representative of mankind.'

44

Both Mao Tun and Chou Tso-jen agreed that the middle stage of development was dictated by class, but ostensibly the schemes begin and conclude at opposite extremes. For Mao Tun the first stage was

'individualist' because it represented the expression of the subjective feelings of the individual who used literature for his own purposes, whilst the third stage represented the depiction expressly of the feelings of all mankind, and could therefore be termed 'mass'. However, Chou's scheme is not in total opposition to this, its first and concluding stages rather appear to be similar. In ancient times, the singer of ballads expressed common aspirations whilst in modern times the "man of sensibility" expresses common experiences. But, in the second case, the "man of sensibility" is expressing his own individual feelings, which are only by extension common to mankind when the individual is viewed in concert with the group. Thus the personal convictions of both critics shaped their perceptions of literary evolution. In the relationship between the individual and mankind, Chou was particularly concerned with the position of the former; Mao Tun emphasized the latter. Both conceived the relationship of literature to man in their own way.

Mao Tun explained the relationship of literature to man in simple but unequivocal terms:

"The idea that ... literature belongs to man is now outdated; literature is not something which belongs to the subjective demands of the writer, an individualistic entity, nor is it an amusement for periods of elation or something with which to while away the time in periods of depression. On the contrary, man belongs to literature."

45

The suggestion that "man belongs to literature" seems to indicate that it is controlled by forces outside man's immediate influence and that therefore man too is bound by these forces. The course of evolution and its demands might be considered such a force. These ideas are in direct contrast to the view of the ancients that literature as an entity was totally within their control. Moreover, seemingly in

support of this, Mao Tun indicated his own interpretation of these demands:

"The aim of literature is to portray human life in all its forms; no matter whether a realistic or symbolistic method, for example, is used, the aim is always to portray human life, to develop the happiness and compassion of mankind, and to possess the characteristics of the age as its background. At the present time, literature has also become a kind of science, which takes human life as the object of its research, contemporary human life; it possesses the tools of its research - these are poetry\*, drama\* and fiction\*. The writer can only accept literature as it stands, he cannot control literature according to his own predilections. Life depicted by writers should be the life of all mankind, depicted by artistic methods without the slightest partiality or subjectivism... This kind of literature no matter whether romantic, realist, symbolistic or mystic... is always human literature, genuine literature." 46

It appears that literature and man were bound by the forces of science itself, although according to M. Gálík this is the only occasion where Mao Tun directly identifies literature with science.<sup>47</sup>

If this outline of the nature of literature suitable for China is compared with that which Mao Tun described a year earlier, a definite change of emphasis is discernible. Whereas previously, he emphasized not only literature's capacity to express human life, but also to guide it and inspire hope in the future, at this juncture he only maintains his conviction that literature is an (aesthetically depicted) expression of life, contemporary life. This certainly indicates a rather more realistic orientation in his thinking which is further endorsed by the statement that the characteristics of the age constitute the background of literature, and by the call for the depiction of life to be totally without subjectivism. However, as suggested above, Mao Tun still did not commit himself to a particular literary school. He also maintained that literature should be universal, appealing to the breadth of mankind.

\* English supplied in original text

The debate as to whether literature should be universal or national was continued in the article 'The Duties and Efforts of Researchers of the New Literature', and is discussed in the following chapter. However, this article begins with a clear statement on the evolution of literature:

"Open a history of Western literature and you will see a succession of developments, from classical to romantic to realistic to neo-romantic ... At each step forward the definition of literature is modified, the relationship between literature and life is bound more closely together, and the mission of literature is assessed anew ... As it gradually evolves, literature is better able to depict the life of all mankind at the time, to express its feelings, to manifest its sufferings and hopes ..."

48

This represents a development from Mao Tun's position the previous year because it reveals a tendency towards a belief in the capacity of literature gradually and continually to perfect and correct itself. Before, the implication of Mao Tun's statements on this subject was to suggest that one particular literary stage had to follow another in strict order, but there was no indication that new stages were somehow an improvement on the preceding ones. Chinese literature had to follow the course of evolutionary development because its contemporary stage was no longer suitable or relevant to contemporary needs. However this article provides an additional incentive for the modernization of Chinese literature. If at every stage of development literature undergoes perfection and correction, logically, its most recent developments are the most advanced. Yet this assumption does require qualification; Mao Tun's statement in 1920 that "newest" does not equal "best"<sup>49</sup> may be interpreted in two ways. It is necessary to establish whether Mao Tun was discussing the "daring vanguard" or the mainstream of literature. It is clear that the very newest literary developments, not yet accepted into the mainstream of literature,



might well be of questionable value. But Mao Tun's statement might also be interpreted to mean that the most recent developments in the mainstream of literature are not the "best", i.e. the most desirable, for the contemporary needs of Chinese literature. This second alternative seems to be his meaning in his article, 'Manifesto of the Column of the New Tide of Fiction' in 1920, and is still consistent with the views expressed in the present article, in which Mao Tun maintained his advocacy of neo-romanticism, (see below). Nevertheless, both articles appear to support a strictly deterministic view of literary evolution, but, on further examination of this article, not one entirely precluding the individuality (個性) of the author, which Mao Tun considered an essential element in the work of creation.<sup>50</sup> This appears to contradict his prescriptions for literature in the previous article, where he stated that the depiction of life should be "without the slightest selfishness or subjectivism (沒有一毫私心 不存一絲主觀)." <sup>51</sup> However, in this February article he criticized contemporary Chinese writers for imitating examples from Western literature and thereby lacking "individuality" in their depiction of life.<sup>52</sup> "Individuality" (個性) here implies something like genuineness and honesty regarding one's own perceptions of life and one's depiction of it, and not using the eyes and mind of another through which to view life. In addition, there must be a scientific detachment. It is when a writer "allows his own feelings to dominate literature"<sup>53</sup> that Mao Tun will accuse him of selfishness or subjectivism. It is to avoid such an extreme approach that Mao Tun also recommended what he termed neo-romanticism:

"Romantic literature and naturalistic literature both go to extremes. The description of ugliness does indeed have artistic value, but it only shows one side of life and cannot

be considered a complete, faultless and faithful representation. Works of Western post-realistic neo-romantics are able to combine observation and imagination and express life in synthesis. Creative writers must constantly take this advancement in art and ideology into consideration."

54

At last Mao Tun provided something of a definition of his conception of neo-romanticism. In its combination of romanticism and realism it should provide a more balanced expression of reality. However, this depends on whether or not one accepts that realism/naturalism is restricted to a description of ugliness. An "objective representation of contemporary social reality" would not seek to exclude the ugly, but this does not mean it concentrates on it exclusively. The debate continued.

The article 'The Social Background and Creation' of July 1921 marks a new development in Mao Tun's literary thought. Here he appears to have rejected the idea that literature is shaped by the forces of literary evolution, rather proposing that it should be considered in terms of social background and environment. It begins:

"There is an old Chinese saying: 'The sounds of a well-governed age are peaceful and harmonious ... the sounds of an age in chaos are resentful and angry ... the sounds of an age in ruin are mournful and lamenting .' This is to say, a certain type of social background will produce a certain type of literature. This original observation was correct, but in the past people thought that 'sounds' which were 'peaceful and harmonious', 'resentful and angry', or 'mournful and lamenting' were omens of a 'well-governed age', an 'age in chaos', or an 'age in ruin', which is definitely incorrect. We can say that it is precisely because the age is 'in chaos' that the characteristics of literature have inevitably become 'resentful and angry'. A 'resentful and angry' social background produces 'resentful and angry' literature, it is not the case that the 'resentful and angry' literature exists first and subsequently creates a 'resentful and angry' social background! We further ought to know that it is entirely reasonable that the literary works of an 'age in chaos' can be 'resentful and angry', which rightly proves that contemporary writers can fulfil their duties."

55

In other words China's contemporary situation may be deemed to be that of an 'age in chaos' (亂世) and Chinese literature should reflect this. In a brief investigation of the literatures of several oppressed nations, Mao Tun "proved" that the phenomena manifested in these literatures was a "natural production from the social background", and that this provided "solid evidence" that "literature is a reflection of the age" (文學是時代的反映).<sup>56</sup> The influence of Mao Tun's recent study of Marxism is generally noted to be apparent here<sup>57</sup> - a remark by Wellek is also pertinent:

'It is not surprising that those who believe in a social determination of literature have gone to Marxism for a more rigorous method and more concrete analysis, with apparently far more certain results.'

58

This was the direction in which Mao Tun's deliberations were eventually to take him, but in 1921, the conclusion to this article indicates that he had not yet passed too far along this road:

"Overall, I feel that genuine literature is literature which expresses life in society, literature which is related to mankind ..."

59

It is also interesting to note Mao Tun's pseudo-scientific approach, the use of phrases such as "this proves that ..." etc. Yet in combination with this, he looked to an ancient Chinese authority to support his propositions: this recalls his stated intentions in 1920, namely to

"...use the old as research material, to lift out its special characteristics, to combine them with the special characteristics of Western literature ..."

60

A second article in the same issue, 'The Way Forward for Creative Writing' endorses the new development in Mao Tun's thinking, and seems to go further down the road towards socialist realism:

"...if we grant that in addition to being a reflection of the age, a picture of the social background, whether obliquely or overtly, literature must contain resistance to the evil

of the present age, and a bright trust in the future ..."

61

This raises the question of objectivity; Mao Tun had already briefly referred to it, but the following months were to see him more pre-occupied with it. Wellek writes:

'There is a tension between description and prescription, truth and instruction, which cannot be resolved logically ... In the new Russian term 'socialist realism' the contradiction is confessed quite openly: the writer ought to describe society as it is but he must also describe it as it should or will be.'

62

The issue of description is taken up in the article 'A Criticism of the Creative Works of April, May and June', in August 1921, which is concerned with the failure of contemporary Chinese writers to present scientific description from experience.<sup>63</sup> Once again a tension is revealed between Mao Tun's own creative preference, and that which he felt best suited the needs of contemporary Chinese literature. It is clear that it is first necessary to be able to portray society as it is, from one's own experience, before one can extend beyond this to consider the future. Thus Mao Tun's call to young Chinese writers was:

"... go among the people, gain experience, and first create Chinese naturalist literature otherwise today's 'new literature' will turn again down the 'old road'."

64

During the latter months of 1921, there is a definite vacillation perceptible in Mao Tun's critical writing, reflective of this tension. In the short editorial column 'The Last Page' of this August issue, not only did he continue to advocate naturalism, but it is apparent that he had by no means left the question of literary evolution alone either:

"Although the period of Naturalism in literature was very short, its influence on literary technique was very great.

Admittedly nowadays people feel naturalism has a certain number of shortcomings, and the banner of naturalism is no longer raised in the literary scene. But among great contemporary writers - whether they are of a neo-romantic, mystic or symbolistic persuasion - there is not one who has not undergone the baptism of naturalism (自然主義的洗禮). Recently Chinese creative writing has become more idealistic than a couple of years ago and if one does not take this opportunity vigorously to promote naturalism I fear that the 'new literature' will slip back into its old rut." 65

It appears that the contemporary condition of Chinese creative writing so shocked Mao Tun that he was compelled to revert to his earlier acceptance of the fact that Chinese literature would remain for some time behind Western literary developments. The concern that it might "slip back into its old rut" outweighed the desire to catch up with the West as soon as possible. It is furthermore worthy of note that in the past few articles Mao Tun started to use the term 'naturalism' instead of 'realism'. The use of the second term does not appear to denote any change in intended meaning. (See p. 43 below).

In his introductory article to the issue devoted to the literature of oppressed people, the pendulum swings back in the opposite direction, for Mao Tun considered this literature expressly in terms of the socio-political background:

"The literature of a people is the expression of its national character, a product of the historical and social background and of the thought tide of the times."

66

It is possible to view this vacillation as illustrative of Mao Tun's earlier call to "advance simultaneously along several paths", this itself being symptomatic of the underlying tension. However it should be borne in mind that this article is concerned with the question of translators and readers carrying out adequate research into these factors in literature from the West in order that they

might properly understand them. Therefore it gives particular emphasis to them.

The December issue of 1921 carried a translation by Hsiao Feng (曉風 - pseudonym of Ch'en Wang-tao 陳望道)<sup>67</sup> of a study by the Japanese critic Shimamura Hogetsu (島村抱月) entitled 'Naturalism in Literature', to which was appended a strong recommendation from Mao Tun as editor. Firstly he underlined again the importance of naturalism in the scheme of literary development:

"... although the present time is not the era when naturalism first appeared, the position of naturalism in literature has already been determined; there is probably no longer any need to doubt this."

68

In the light of this Mao Tun particularly aimed his recommendations at the young, whose attempts at creative writing he had earlier reviewed and found so wanting:

"Although this work [by Shimamura Hogetsu] was originally written in 1908, over ten years ago, and appears a little old, the critical discussion in it is still medicine for our illness; let the youth of our country read it and in calling to mind the situation of our country's literature, they will inevitably succumb to the feelings of yester-year."

69

Immediately preceding this translation was an article by Mao Tun himself entitled 'In Commemoration of the Centenary of Flaubert's Birth', in which he took the opportunity to emphasize the importance of Flaubert for China as a 'forerunner of naturalism', for

"French naturalistic literature has of course a very important position in modern literature and furthermore has already exerted a decidedly great influence on world literature, there is no doubt about this."

70

However in the conclusion of the article Mao Tun comes up against the painfully backward position of Chinese literature:

"... at that time writers of every other country in the world were also greatly influenced [by Flaubert]. China has all

along been totally cut off from Western literature therefore ... there was no influence. 'Madame Bovary' has not even been translated, and I am afraid that a meeting between China and Flaubert will not take place. As we now respectfully commemorate the centenary of his birth we must have two hopes for our country in the future: firstly that Flaubert's scientific descriptive attitude be introduced to rectify the age-old practice of Chinese writers of taking description for granted; secondly, I hope that Flaubert's reverent and serious view of literature which looks upon it as if it were a religion will become widespread in our country, to rectify the age-old mentality of writers of looking lightly on literature." 71

Mao Tun's strength is his ability to look forward with optimism, despite the enormity of the task. As is exemplified in the following chapter, he simply selected those aspects of a writer's technique, skills, philosophy etc. which he felt could be held up as an example to China. He was not urging Chinese writers to adhere diligently to Flaubert's literary example in toto in this article, but encouraging research so that Chinese could come to their own conclusions, and create a new literature.

In the first few months of 1922, the correspondence column of HSYP reveals a certain preoccupation on the part of Mao Tun with the means to remedy the crisis within contemporary Chinese literature. In February 1922, he forcefully condemned the lack of effectual literary criticism in China, which was not a new phenomenon, as he had previously pointed out<sup>72</sup>:

"... the atmosphere of Chinese criticism is really very quiet; the works of criticism we come across in HSYP are not in general chastizing but [offer] superficial praise, there is simply no criticism which cuts to the quick.

At present it is popular to say 'it is not right to adhere to a particular -ism', if one advocates naturalism-realism then all the more will one become an object of abuse ... But such an epidemic of gentility and politeness of tone is not at all helpful to the development of a new Chinese literature, indeed it is harmful! In the past there were works of literature but not works of criticism;

China had no system to explain literary technique or [to provide] a definition of literature ... Moreover the descriptive method which we have used throughout history has not respected fidelity but merely considered what was appropriate for the flow of the writing. Regarding literature as an amusement and an insincere descriptive method are the two great obstacles along the path of literary evolution - it can be said that this is the reason why Chinese literature cannot develop."

73

He still maintained the position he held at the end of 1921, namely that it was necessary to undergo the 'baptism of naturalism', in the context of literary evolution:

"In the world literary scene, it appears that naturalism is a thing of the past, but if our Chinese literature, which continually lags behind, is to move forward, the period of naturalism cannot be strode over ... in my own opinion, if we do not advocate naturalism now chaos will result ... our new Chinese writers might be forever lost in a gilded, semi-mystical, semi-idealistic world ... Some say 'Allow the creative world to develop freely'; one might well ask how a creative world without the strength to develop will do so, even if it is given free rein ... We must understand that we have no foundation for the New Literature everyone is talking about nowadays - the roots and shoots come completely from foreign lands, we have none, just like a newly-born child. How can you tell him to develop freely?

In general there are two aspects to any literary -ism: on the one hand it indicates the universal trends of the era, on the other it indicates a stage in the evolution of literature and art; if we accept that modern world literature must influence a future new Chinese literature ... then it is necessary for us also to develop the -isms already developed along the evolutionary path of Western literature, especially naturalism ... because although its period was short, its influence on the whole literary and artistic sphere was very great. I now believe this very strongly and therefore fundamentally oppose those who do not advocate a particular -ism with entire conviction."

74

Mao Tun did not advocate 'naturalism' for its own sake at this time, but considered its introduction as the only means to treat the chronic condition of Chinese literature. The emphasis on the brevity of the naturalistic stage in world literature as in August<sup>75</sup> indicates a lingering preference for post-realistic trends, and the desire that China too should rapidly proceed along the evolutionary path after



its 'baptism'. There is still no obvious difference of meaning intended by the use of the term 'naturalism', as opposed to 'realism'. This remains difficult to determine because Mao Tun continued to express himself in generalities, slipping somewhat into the practice of 'extreme nominalism' discussed on page 12 above. Indeed at one point he even referred to 'naturalism - realism'. The question of the fettering of the contemporary scene by the traditions and attitudes of the past is problematical in Mao Tun's writing, as is the case in the writings of other contemporaries. Whilst on the one hand strongly criticizing the backward attitudes inherited from the old tradition, as here, on the other he did not hesitate to make use of an ancient authority when its purport coincided with his intentions.

His reply to Hsü Ch'iu-ch'ung (徐秋冲) in April 1922 indicates an exceedingly perceptive attitude towards the concept of literary evolution, lacking in many, and is ample testimony to the intention expressed in the 'Manifesto' not to become a "slave to -isms". It also endorses and expands upon comments made in the article 'The Duties and Efforts of Researchers of the New Literature', in February 1921, regarding the continual self-perfecting capabilities of literature in the course of the evolutionary process:

"... the integral value of any literary -ism is one thing and its value within a particular era is quite another; the means whereby [world] literature has reached its present situation is not through any aimless drifting, nor is the rise of each -ism an empty leap. According to the previous leaps made by Western literature, romanticism succeeded classicism as a reaction; likewise naturalism succeeded romanticism. As time proceeded, each reaction sought to remedy the shortcomings of the previous era and at the same time moved a step forward. If we look at this from the point of view of emphasis on rationality or emphasis on emotion, then romanticism was a reaction to classicism and naturalism was also a reaction to romanticism. In their emphasis on rationality, the fundamental philosophy of classicism and naturalism is really

the same; nevertheless, one cannot simply say that the opposition of naturalism to the romantic school was a return to classicism. The reason why these -isms could not be reborn was firstly because the 'spirit of the age' (時代的精神) had changed and secondly because literature and art themselves reach a peak and then decline, thus there is reaction."

76

The beginning of this quotation recalls the correspondence of two months previous, viz:

"... there are two aspects to any literary -ism: on the one hand it indicates the universal trends of the era, on the other it indicates a stage in the evolution of literature and art ..."

77

The implication is that both the integral value of a particular literary school and its significance relative to the era should be understood by Chinese writers. However, it is its integral literary value which is necessarily of primary importance since the era in which past schools originally appeared has obviously been superceded. Nevertheless one should not denigrate the importance of the era in the Chinese context either:

"Frankly speaking, I fear it is a little too early for China to be taking up naturalism now; as far as the present general situation is concerned, China still needs to go through the end of romanticism, only then will she be qualified to advocate naturalism, because a large number of people still willingly submit to the fetters of traditional thinking and classicism. But, unfortunately, the age advances, and the scientific method is already our golden rule. Other elements of romanticism are certainly not suitable for today, so all we can do is allow naturalism to advance."

78

Not only did Mao Tun reveal here the extent of the backwardness of Chinese literature, as he saw it, but he also restated his absolute faith in the revolutionary process relevant to the epoch. Once again it is implied that evolutionary progress is dependent, to a greater or lesser extent, upon the intervention of the critic. It would appear that only he could perceive the state of the epoch, the correct moment for the advocacy of the next stage in the course of evolution. This

provides a two-fold indication of the predicament of the Chinese literary scene, for not only did its backward state demand as rapid a development as possible along this predetermined path, but, as Mao Tun had recently pointed out, it suffered from a distinct dearth of those who should provide a regulatory force in this regard, namely effectual exponents of literary criticism.

This reply also provides further insight into Mao Tun's conception of the actual evolutionary process itself, first broached in HSYP in 1920 in the 'Manifesto of the Column of the New Tide of Fiction' when he wrote that there was:

"a change to objectivity and then a further movement back to subjectivity, however it was not the same type of subjectivity as before."

79

This is not a process of soaring ever upward - 'the principle of continuity',<sup>80</sup> as Wellek terms it - but rather reveals the influence of the Hegelian dialectical conception of evolution, as Gálík has suggested.<sup>81</sup> Wellek described this as follows:

'[literature] is conceived as self-developing, in constant give-and-take with society and history.'

82

Gálík makes the following observation:

'... he [Mao Tun] points to the known triad method of Hegel when he speaks about the renaissance of romanticism in world literature at the beginning of our century. According to him old romanticism is the first moment of the triad, i.e. thesis, while realism is the second one, i.e. antithesis, and finally neo-romanticism is the resulting moment, i.e. synthesis. He explicitly emphasizes that this is not a circular development but a development according to principles of evolution.'

83

Gálík draws no further conclusions, but such an influence contradicts considerations of the 'epoch' as a force which shapes literature.

In 1920 Mao Tun expressed a certain ambivalence in this regard, implying that works should be judged according to the criteria pertaining

to the era but simultaneously recognizing the eternal values of beauty and excellence. The following year he strongly asserted that literature was "a natural production from the social background" and "a reflection of the age". If literary development were totally determined by the social background then the relationship between literature and society would not be a dialectical one. Furthermore, Mao Tun's stress on the universal application of evolutionary theory would require a universality of sociological development in order that Chinese literature proceeded along this predetermined path. In the light of succeeding articles as well as preceding statements, which generally tend towards the sociological determination of literature, I therefore conclude that such influence upon Mao Tun's thinking by Hegelian philosophy as there was, was not long-lasting since it failed to make a permanent impression.

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the influence of the widely used, mostly English or American, text books on literature and literary criticism, also read by Mao Tun.<sup>84</sup> One difficulty in this respect is the failure on the part of Mao Tun to acknowledge his sources - as is shown in Chapter 3 below. The following reply to Wang Chin-hsin (王晉金), also in the correspondence of the April issue, 1922, is no exception:

"Regarding the issue of literary and artistic criticism ... I believe that 'instinctive' criticism does not constitute criticism at all. At present, I sympathize most with Taine's purely objective critical method. Although it has shortcomings, it is an apposite method."

85

There is held to be little doubt that Mao Tun came to know of Taine through such text books,<sup>86</sup> however, as Gálík has written,

'Influence does not mean anything. It is only an impulse.

Important are the new dimensions by which the subject under influence can be enriched.'

87

The article which is acknowledged to approach most nearly Taine's critical theory is Mao Tun's 'Literature and Life'. Bonnie McDougall writes:

'The article itself has been considered a key document in the history of modern Chinese literature, appearing in several compilations though undated and unplaced. It seems originally to have been a lecture delivered before an audience in Sung-chiang , a few miles South of Shanghai ...'. 88

She suggests that it was probably written late in 1921 or early in 1922; Gálik places it in 1922<sup>89</sup>, and makes no further comment. Because of the importance of this piece it is included in this study, despite not having been published in HSYF. Before it is examined, it is useful to briefly summarize Mao Tun's previous relevant statements in order that it might indeed be possible to plot any 'new dimensions' in his later articles. It is of course not possible to pin-point a particular date from which time Taine's influence can be seen to be felt, but if one makes the arbitrary assumption that 'Literature and Life' was written around the time of the reply to Wang Chin-hsin, and presumes that it was also at about this time that he was carrying out the main part of his research, then it would seem that articles written earlier in 1921 would have been written without the benefit of a comparatively clear view of Taine's critical theory. In 'The Relationship of Literature to Man and the Old Chinese Misconception of the Writer's Position' of January 1921, Mao Tun wrote that the aim of literature was an expression of life without subjectivism, that it was a science whose object of research was human life and that the characteristics of the age (時代的特色) constituted its background.<sup>90</sup> The article 'The Social Background and Creation', of July 1921 took this a stage further by asserting that literature was a "natural production from the social

background" and a "reflection of the age".<sup>91</sup> The foreword to the October issue of 1921 stated that literature expresses the national character of a people and reasserted that it was "the product of the historical and social background and of the thought tide of the times".<sup>92</sup>

'Literature and Life'<sup>93</sup> begins with an offensive against the sorry state of literary criticism in traditional China, which directly recalls Mao Tun's reply to Chou Tsan-hsiang in February 1922.<sup>94</sup> Both pieces cite the work 'The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons' (文心雕龍) by Liu Hsieh (劉勰) and its failure to investigate fundamental questions such as the nature of literature, or literary technique. He wrote:

"He [Liu Hsieh] only gave a subjective definition of the literary genres ... he did not carry out analytical research into works."

95

Mao Tun continued his criticism thus:

"... there were no clearly defined parameters between literature itself and other areas such as philosophy or linguistics. Those who discussed literature largely made judgements from a rhetorical point of view, and paid no attention to ideology."

96

It is in this context that Mao Tun's call for emphasis on ideology over form in 'A Criticism of the Compromise between Old and New Literature'<sup>97</sup> should be understood.

The following paragraph introduced what Mao Tun termed the "universal slogan" of Western literary research, namely that "literature is a reflection of life" (文學是人生的反映), and continued:

"For example, if life is a cup, then literature is its reflection in a mirror. Therefore it can be said that 'society is the background of literature.'  
'Background' is the starting point".

98

Bonnie McDougall makes the point that this 'slogan' was by no means universally accepted in the West,<sup>99</sup> but if this passage is read in the context of what precedes it in the essay, Mao Tun's point rather seems to be that there was a general recognition that external factors cannot fail but be reflected in literature in some way. In comparison traditional China lacked any such criterion for the evaluation and understanding of literature.

In January 1921 when Mao Tun had written that literature should be an aesthetic expression of life, which implicitly recognizes the importance of the writer in the process of creation, it was in the context of advice to creative writers. By July his much more deterministic statement that literature is actually shaped by the social background is used as a guide firstly for literary criticism (批評文學的話頭來做註解)<sup>100</sup> and secondly for creative writing. The third statement in October, which broadens the range of literary determinants, was written in the context of understanding foreign literature. Thus Mao Tun had already shown a considerable tendency to merge concerns of literary criticism and creative writing; this essay continues this tendency, providing both a means to a better understanding of Western literature and a prescription for Chinese writers.

Mao Tun's statement that literature reflects life maintained his earlier stance vis à vis literary determinism and parallels the tendency of Taine to 'minimize the fact and value of art ...[which] becomes only a piece of life'.<sup>101</sup> It is clear that Mao Tun had already come to the conclusion that 'background' in general terms was

the starting point both for criticism and creation, but had previously always reconciled this idea with the need for Chinese literature to evolve and transcend the strict confines of reality. The contradiction is not resolved in this essay:

"... there is also literature which transcends human life and treats the ideal world. Some literature of this type is indeed very good, but is not linked to society (不是社會的)." 102

As far as the nature of 'background' is concerned, Mao Tun had already indicated several elements to be included within it, such as 'the characteristics of the age', 'the national character (民族性) of a people' and 'the thought tide of the times'. In this respect Taine's formula of 'race-milieu-moment' was a useful one to provide a coherent scheme. Wellek writes of Taine's concept of 'race' that it was 'the old Volksgeist, the genius of a nation ... simply the French mind or the English character'.<sup>103</sup> Mao Tun incorporated this into his own definition but also included the physical aspects of race:

"Just as races differ, so does the sentiment of literature; every race has its own literature in the same way that [it has its own] skin, hair, eyes etc. ... The special characteristics of a people (民族的性質) are also related to literature ..." 104

Mao Tun particularly emphasized the importance of 'milieu' which he termed 'environment' (環境). This included the influences of region, family, circumstances, friends, but:

"Environment is not only essentially limited just to the concrete; the thought tide, the political situation, the prevailing customs all make up the environment of a particular era. An author is implicitly influenced by his environment and certainly cannot extricate himself and become independent of his environment." 105

Mao Tun took up Taine's 'complete deterministic explanation of literature (and all mental life)',<sup>106</sup> to account for the fact that "recent Chinese novels are too narrow in scope".<sup>107</sup> In his perception



"... it is not something which the Chinese do not have the ability to improve upon, but really just that this is inherent in the environment of contemporary Chinese writers." 108

Just as Taine's concept of 'moment' can be seen as the 'milieu of a particular time'<sup>109</sup> so Mao Tun's 'environment' and 'epoch' tend to overlap. In his section on environment he wrote: "A certain era has a certain environment"<sup>110</sup> and included the thought tide as one of its attributes. In the following section he stated:

"In English the concept of epoch\* includes the thought tide of the age and the social context. Or, it is more apt to call it the 'power of the age' (時勢). Nowadays everyone knows the expression 'spirit of the age' (時代精神). This comprises politics, philosophy, literature, art and so on ..." 111

The thought tide is included in both sections. He continued:

"The reason why modern Western literature is realistic is because science is the spirit of the modern age. The scientific spirit emphasizes a quest for truth, thus this is the only aim of literature and art. The attitude of a scientist emphasizes objective observation therefore literature stresses objective description ... Thus [one should] write down exactly what one sees." 112

In this passage there is a perceptible shift in emphasis to a prescriptive stance. It recalls an earlier definition of Mao Tun's that literature is a science whose object of research is contemporary human life.<sup>113</sup> Also, despite earlier intimations to the contrary, Mao Tun restated the importance of individuality (個性) in creativity, in the sense of honesty in portrayal. He wrote:

"Furthermore, because individuality is respected ... one [should] speak one's mind. There [should be] complete honesty, one should not deceive others. This is a case of the expression of the spirit of the modern age in literature and art." 114

Indeed he went further, following the example of many others before him, including the views expressed in several text books of the period,

\* English supplied in the original text

and added the fourth concept of personality\* (作家的人格)

to Taine's scheme:

"A revolutionary person will definitely write revolutionary literature, a lover of nature will definitely blend this into his work ..."

115

Although Taine emphasized a deterministic explanation of literature and was an advocate of objective art, there was a place for the individual personality. In Wellek's interpretation:

'Art is both representative of reality and expressive of personality. The author expresses himself, his particular view of the world, and thereby depicts the world around him and penetrates into the essence of things.'

116

If Mao Tun was sufficiently aware of Taine's critical theory through his reading of secondary sources, this combining of two tendencies which also coexisted within his own thinking would have been attractive.

The importance of studying this essay is not so much to investigate how it is influenced by Taine, but to provide a source of reference by which to examine how Mao Tun's own ideas were enriched by this influence in succeeding articles. The concluding paragraph is not particularly revealing in this respect. Apart from seeking to reveal these forces at work within traditional Chinese literature, presumably to indicate the universality of their application, Mao Tun ends by making a call to Chinese readers which he had previously made, namely to study these forces with a view to a better understanding of literature.

There is further reference to Mao Tun's reading of text books in his reply to Lü Fei-nan (吕菲南) in June 1922. This makes a clear statement which resolves Mao Tun's problematical use of the two terms

\*English supplied in the original text

'naturalism' and 'realism'.

"Naturalism and realism in literature are one and the same; formerly some critics held that the difference between naturalism and realism resided in the extent to which description was objective; they considered that if there was comparatively less objectivity the result was realism, if there was comparatively more objectivity the result was naturalism. The Englishman Sainsburg [sic]<sup>117</sup> seems to maintain this. Prof. W.A. Neilson says that writers of the realistic school observe reality and make efforts to put over its image; but they do not make use of reason to interpret it or of imagination to improve upon it. Those of the naturalistic school simply take this skill to a greater extreme. Chandler, in 'Aspects of Modern Drama', Ch. II also maintains this. In the latter half of the nineteenth century romanticism was gradually repressed in the European literary scene - there was a reaction among literary works. In France Balzac early adopted an objective descriptive method to write 'La Comédie Humaine'. After him the works of Flaubert assumed a purely objective attitude; when 'Madame Bovary' appeared in 1857, the critical world unanimously said that it had broken new ground in the realm of the modern novel. Some years later the great banner of Zola's naturalism was raised up high. Nowadays it is said that naturalism began with Zola ...others such as Balzac and Flaubert are deemed to belong to the realist school. This is the universal categorization."

118

By his own admission Mao Tun's understanding of the subject was based on secondary sources and therefore does not extend beyond the realm of generality. As far as Mao Tun's use of terminology is concerned, Gálik makes the interesting observation that it depended upon the particular critic he was reading at the time: 'Mao Tun always used that label for which he felt momentarily most disposed'.<sup>119</sup> However, the main concern is not the term used, but what it signified. This is elucidated in a long article in the following (July) issue entitled 'Naturalism and Modern Chinese Fiction'.<sup>120</sup> Mao Tun seems to have been working on this article during the preceding few months in reply to the debate which continued in the correspondence column. Another reply in the June issue provided some insight into Mao Tun's preoccupations. A certain Chou Chih-i (周志伊) wrote in with the

following query about the advocacy of naturalism:

'In general a naturalistic literature contains a deterministic and fatalistic attitude to life which holds that it is impossible to stand up against one's lot in life. It is important to discuss this with regard to the reader's response, if literature really can guide human life. Especially in contemporary China, I feel that it is better to encourage the youth towards destructive tendencies, to resist everything, so as to have a reasonably attainable aim of reconstruction. Naturalism is inevitably too objective and could easily lead the reader to believe there is no way out. As for aspirations for struggle, it is possible that some might feel frustrated since an individual who is bound within his environment might wish to flee from it.' 121

Mao Tun's reply raises questions, particularly with regard to optimism in literature, which were dealt with in the following issue:

"Naturalistic literature for the most part depicts the individual oppressed by his environment without the strength for resistance, and culminates in tragedy; of course, this indeed can often produce a great number of unfortunate influences. Recently in the West, naturalism has been denounced over this issue. I have also had my doubts about this and practically lost confidence ... My own present belief is that we need naturalism, but should not accept it in its entirety; of course, the Weltanschauung of naturalism is not suitable for the Chinese youth. But we are concerned with naturalism in literature not its Weltanschauung. We should adopt the merits of naturalistic technique." 122

On previous occasions when Mao Tun had made strong recommendations that naturalism/realism should be adopted, he had alluded to certain shortcomings which he did not define, except in a brief reference in the article 'The Duties and Efforts of Researchers of the New Literature'.<sup>123</sup> In this article he pointed to the extreme orientation of naturalism whose portrayal of ugliness did not present a complete or balanced view of life. This view is endorsed in this reply to Chou Chih-i some eighteen months later. The implication is that literature should manifest a more optimistic attitude to life whilst maintaining 'realistic' description, which points directly to Mao Tun's definition in February 1921.<sup>124</sup> For a clearer statement of

Mao Tun's views in this regard it is apposite now to turn to the article 'Naturalism and Modern Chinese Fiction'.

This long article first provides an in-depth analysis of the situation of the novel in contemporary Chinese literature,<sup>125</sup> and outlines the shortcomings both of literature still written in a classical style and of attempts to produce new literature. Of the old school he wrote that writers understood neither descriptive technique in narration nor objective observation. Their biggest fault was in the realm of ideology, in their view of literature as an entertainment to pass the time and as a means of making money. Novels of the new school were infinitely better than those of the old school because they did not have this fundamental ideological defect; however in terms of technique and orientation, these writers also were unable to describe objectively from life. They also showed a tendency towards using literature as a propaganda tool and while their content lacked depth their overall intentions were too simple and superficial.<sup>126</sup> Mao Tun proposed naturalism as a tonic for the depressing state of Chinese literature, and indicated two areas in which naturalism could particularly rectify bad practices, the method of description and the selection of subject matter. He wrote:

"We all know that the greatest aim of exponents of naturalism is 'truth' (真); in their view that which is not the truth has no beauty and cannot be considered good. They consider that the purpose of literature is on the one hand to express the true universal nature of all mankind and on the other to express the particularity of the life of the individual. They consider everything in the universe to be determined by a single universal principle so that no two things within it are exactly alike ... therefore if one strictly seeks for 'truth', on the spot observation (實地觀察) is necessary for everything. This necessity for first conscientiously observing things item by item is something that exponents of naturalism advocate as a common belief.

What kind of descriptive attitude should there be after this immediate observation? Some, such as Zola, advocate description exactly according to one's observations, others, such as the Goncourt brothers advocate that these should undergo subjective treatment and then the reflected image should be described. The former is a purely objective attitude, the latter has the addition of some subjectivism. We say now that naturalism refers to the former." 127

Although Mao Tun made reference to Zola in his advocacy of what he called 'naturalism', it is clear from previous statements that the use of this term should not be taken at face value. The seeking of objective truth in typicality much more recalls the method of Balzac, whom he mentioned in this context, along with Flaubert, as forerunners of naturalism. But he continued:

"The spirit of this kind of immediate observation was taken to its extreme by the naturalist school. Not only is the overall background of a whole book, the whole of society, observed in this way, but when discussing a Paris cafe, they would themselves go and observe all the cafes in Paris in order to compare the construction, the furnishing of the interior and the atmosphere (in other words, the whole situation of each one). Then they would include a description of the most universal representative in their novel. Not only are members of the naturalistic school well-versed in this technique but also neoromantics such as Maeterlinck; it can be said to be a fundamental concept esteemed by all contemporary writers." 128

This recalls Mao Tun's reply to Chou Chi-i the previous month when he asserted that "We should adopt the merits of naturalistic technique". It appears that Mao Tun regarded such an approach to description as fundamental to the future evolution of Chinese literature, especially as he stated the opinion that it was the basis of succeeding world literary developments. It is to be noted that Mao Tun was still very much concerned with neoromanticism in literature, a point which is clearly reflected as the article continues.

Mao Tun also stressed objective description:

"Those of the naturalistic school regard human life as a whole completely objectively and soberly without a hint of subjectivism."

129

He explained that this was a strong point of naturalism, for whatever the depths of depravity and so on of the object of their description, they maintained this attitude. The stance Mao Tun maintained in this article recalls that in 'Literature and Life' where he emphasized the scientific perspective of objective description. The relationship between science and naturalism, Mao Tun discussed in the section which followed, but whereas in 'Literature and Life' he stressed the importance of the individual 'personality' in creativity, this is not mentioned here. Thus once again Mao Tun partly diverges from Zolaist literary philosophy, which included the important concept of 'tempérament': 'Une oeuvre d'art est un coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament'.<sup>130</sup> However, as Wellek writes, this was maintained .

'...in spite of the impersonal implications of his theories which required the 'dethronement' of the imagination, the profession of impartiality toward the characters and issues of his novels, and in general a belief in the typical and universal.'

131

It would appear that the question of the position of the personality of the individual writer within creative work was a difficult one for Mao Tun to resolve. Not only was his ultimate preference still for neoromanticism, as he stated in the following paragraph (see below), despite the immediate need for a Chinese 'baptism of naturalism', but neither Zola nor Taine provided a conclusive system.

Mao Tun continued his discussion of the benefits of naturalism with reference to the selection of subject matter:

"Naturalism has undergone the baptism of modern science: its descriptive method, its subject matter and its ideology

are all related to modern science ... Evolution, psychology, social problems, problems of morality, the problems of the sexes etc. are all the subject matter of naturalism. Naturalistic writers have all researched the problems of evolution and society ... In China today those with intentions regarding new literature work hard to create social novels: they wish to describe the conflict between the ideologies of the old and young, and the darker side of society, but they still cannot avoid shallow satire. I consider this to be because writers have not studied the naturalistic school's priority for research. If one has not studied social problems when writing a social novel, and only relies on 'intuition' (直覺), it is hardly surprising that one's intentions are inevitably shallow ... We must study naturalistic writers and incorporate scientific principles into our novels, we must also study social questions, the problems of the sexes, evolution and other theories. If we do not, I am afraid that there is no way to avoid simplicity in content and shallowness in intention..."

132

There is an interesting similarity here with Mao Tun's discussion of the force of 'epoch' and the 'spirit of the age' in 'Literature and Life', which were said to comprise politics and philosophy as well as literature and art. Once again Mao Tun appears to blend criteria of literary criticism and literary creation, and to take Taine's scheme into the realm of creation: not only should these forces which shape literature be studied to gain a better understanding of literature but they should be used to determine content and intention in creation.

The final section of this article is entitled 'Are there any doubts?' in which he seems to have resolved his own personal doubts expressed earlier, particularly in his reply to Chou Chih-i. He divided these doubts into two categories, dissatisfaction with naturalism, either on aesthetic or ideological grounds, and doubts regarding the soundness of the intention to advocate naturalism in China, also on either aesthetic or ideological grounds.

"Firstly there is dissatisfaction with naturalism on aesthetic grounds which forms the main basis of the



neo-romantics' attack on naturalistic theory ...

(1) The purely objective descriptive method advocated by exponents of naturalism is not right because the objective and the subjective in literary description - that is observation and imagination - complement each other, like the two wheels of a cart. If one tends too much towards the subjective it is easy to flow into the unreal, which the naturalistic school strongly reproves, but a tendency too much to the objective will make human life stiff and lifeless. The purpose of literature is both an expression of human life in society and of the fate of the individual; to go along with the naturalistic stand is to cancel out the latter.

(2) The objective method of observation advocated by exponents of naturalism in fact errs towards subjective bias ... Their subjective bias moves first from an affirmation of the ugliness of human life to a quest for the objective face of ugliness, with the result that they only see one side of life; they should realize that in human life there is both ugliness and beauty, and since the naturalistic approach is to seek out ugliness, they only see one side. Although the naturalistic school professes objective observation without a hint of subjectivism, it is in fact completely bogged down in subjective observation, just like the old romanticism." 133

These were very serious doubts but Mao Tun dismissed them:

"... they are just two theories, that is all, they have nothing to do with the factual question ... which is how to remedy matters. ( 怎樣補救 )." 134

He continued that a soft approach, although helpful in some cases, was not adequate. It seems that Mao Tun's concern with evolution as a means to "remedy matters" overrode other considerations.

As seen above, he had previously suggested that Chinese literature had to experience a short period of naturalism before neo-romanticism could develop within it. This is echoed here:

"Neo-romanticism is in theory perhaps the most complete [approach] at present, but to introduce it into the contemporary Chinese literary scene when it has not undergone the baptism of naturalism, and has not even gained full benefit from romanticism, would simply be tantamount to praising the beauty of colours before a blind man." 135

His assertion that China had not really gained full benefit even from romanticism directly recalls his reply to Hsü Ch'iu-ch'ung in April 1922 where he stated the same thing, and seems to indicate a certain exasperation at Chinese literature's continual backwardness. In short these doubts are expressed from a perspective beyond that which Chinese literature had reached and were therefore irrelevant. The urgency of the need for the 'baptism of naturalism' outweighed any shortcomings in naturalism itself.

The second category of dissatisfaction with the advocacy of naturalism, on ideological grounds, mirrors the view expressed by Chou Chih-i the previous month. This time Mao Tun showed no vacillation in his refutation:

"...we must understand that a materialistic/deterministic fatalism is hardly the ideological content of naturalistic works, and it is certainly not representative of such works as a whole. It is especially not permissible to say that this is naturalism. Naturalism is one thing, the ideological content of naturalistic works is another - one cannot mix them up. The selection of the naturalistic descriptive method does not entail the selection of a stance of materialistic/deterministic fatalism. Even more is it not the case that what exponents of naturalism can create is a fatalistic ideology. It would first be necessary to have discovered the possibility of such fatalism in society, only then could this ideology appear in literature. If this possibility exists within society, it is futile for us to reject it, it will always develop of its own accord, otherwise there is no possibility of it developing."

136

The first part of this reply is a restatement of his views of the previous month. However he revealed an important development in his thinking on this matter in the second half of the paragraph, namely that ideological content is determined by society. Such a deterministic view could be seen to be influenced by the view expressed in 'Literature and Life' that "background is the starting point". His discussion of this issue is continued in the concluding part of

the article, (see below).

The third point of doubt concerned the advocacy of naturalism in China on aesthetic grounds.

"Firstly, in the main, it is said that the new Chinese literature is just at an embryonic stage, that it should broaden its horizons as much as possible and rely on free creative talent. If it is bound by the confines of a particular school, the direction of its development will be restricted."

137

Mao Tun's refutation of this criticism recalls his reply to Chou Tsan-hsiang in February 1922, particularly the following:

"We must understand that we have no foundation for the New Literature everyone is talking about nowadays - the roots and shoots come completely from foreign lands, we have none, just like a newly-born child. How can you tell him to develop freely?"

138

He wrote:

"Art should of course respect the spirit of free creation. A school of thought with historical authority cannot fetter the creation of a new art, the past developments of the art of mankind have long since told us this; but they also tell us that the regeneration of a national people's literature and art often depends on the promotion of a literary and artistic thought tide from without. In this chaotic situation one for a time moves towards a particular road and only after that does everyone begin to develop of themselves. In this situation of chaos people do not even have a clear understanding of what literature and art are, good literary and artistic works are very few and the majority of writers lurch forward and thereupon advocate free creation! ... In an era like this I feel that all we can do is find a medicine which will cure quickly the defects of readers and writers alike, so that they can all take the correct road. If not the empty cry of 'free creativity' will lead nowhere."

139

In this instance Mao Tun invoked two authorities in support of his argument. The first is "the past developments of the art of mankind": he still looked to world literary developments, as determined by the forces of evolution, as a guide for China. His stated ultimate preference for neo-romantic literature, which he continued

to maintain at this juncture is consistent with this.<sup>140</sup> Yet he also cites the era as a force to be taken into account. This is even more the case with his defence against the suggestion that:

"... modern Chinese fiction is still submissive towards classicism ... which fetters the emotions of the author; in the past there were very few works of Chinese literature which revealed genuine passionate feelings ... since Chinese men of letters have been rather apathetic of late, we should advocate romanticism, with its emphasis on feelings, at this time."

141

Mao Tun replied that an overemphasis on subjective passionate feelings to the point of being a bad influence was not proper, and that the major ideological shortcomings of contemporary literature could not be rectified by romanticism. He continued:

"I ultimately feel that our era is already full of the scientific spirit, everyone has something of a passion for physical science and does not find the treatment of pure feelings by romanticism ultimately satisfying."

142

This last statement also recalls Mao Tun's correspondence with Hsü Ch'iu-ch'ung in April 1922. However, whereas previously he reluctantly accepted that the time to espouse naturalism was nigh, believing that romanticism could still be beneficial, by this time he had come to the conclusion that this was no longer the case.

The debate regarding the suitability of deterministic fatalism in the Chinese context was continued in the concluding paragraph of this article. It was said that such a development would "make people lose their fighting spirit and become pessimistic, without hope".<sup>143</sup> Mao Tun refuted this by once again stressing the importance of society as a determining factor:

"... we must understand that such phenomena as those of weak will being oppressed by their environment and even ideas of fatalism do exist in human life, and that exponents of naturalism only identify and describe them. It is certainly not the case that they do not exist and were created by the naturalists ...

We should learn all the more from exponents of naturalism - which does not mean fatalism - their objective description and immediate observation. They have taken these two tools into almost every city in the West in search of material for novels and the conclusions they reach are scorned by others as fatalistic and unsound thinking. But if we now used these two tools to seek material in Chinese society, I believe that our results would not be the same as those obtained by the Western naturalistic school ... who are admittedly fatalistic and full of hopelessness and grief. But this is because the most common type of life in nineteenth century Europe was exceedingly ugly, and had submitted to materialistic and deterministic fate ... If the most common type of life in our society differs from this, although we might make use of objective description and immediate observation to collect material, how can it be bound to appear like a 'Paris café'? And if it is the same, how could we possibly still pretend to be deaf and avoid mention of it?"

144

In this article Mao Tun continues to maintain the position that both the 'epoch', or background in general, and evolution are forces which shape literature, however he tended ever more increasingly towards the former concept. This had figured in his writing since early in 1921 and seems to stem largely from his study of Marxism. The influence of Taine is less conspicuous, for, although Mao Tun described specific sociological determinants of literature after Taine in 'Literature and Life' he so far showed no tendency to use them elsewhere in his writing. He preferred to refer instead to the 'social background' and the 'age' as he had used them previously. Regarding the nature of Mao Tun's 'naturalism', Gálik, after considerable research, has concluded that it is 'realistic literary theory'.<sup>145</sup> However the concern of this study is not so much the labelling of Mao Tun's literary theory as its contents; hence the examination at length of this important article.

The tendency towards realism and the determination of literature by the socio-political background exhibited by Mao Tun during the

latter part of 1922 is further demonstrated by the article 'Literature and Political Society',<sup>146</sup> in September 1922. In the preceding article it has already been noted how Mao Tun criticized aspiring writers of new literature for using literature as a propaganda tool which meant that the content of their work lacked depth and their overall intentions were too superficial. In the present article he approached the issue from a different angle, refuting the criticism of "those intoxicated by the independence of art"<sup>147</sup> (presumably a thinly-veiled reference to the Creationists) that "all works with political or social overtones are inferior" and "damage the independence of art".<sup>148</sup> He wrote:

"Not many believe now that art should be created for a particular aim ... but to exclude such works from the realm of art is not at all right if one cannot establish that they do not obstruct the independence of art."

149

This indicates that a middle path between extreme didacticism on the one hand and extreme aestheticism on the other should be taken. (This conviction was one which Mao Tun held to for the rest of the decade, despite pressure from many quarters, before he joined the League of Left-Wing Writers.) He continued by examining the relationship between literature and socio-political life in several 'small and oppressed' nations<sup>150</sup> in order to "prove from the facts" that the tendency of literature towards political and social concerns was the effect "of the extremely great influence of the environment upon the writer".<sup>151</sup>

Apart from exhibiting an increasingly deterministic tendency<sup>152</sup> this also endorses Galik's conclusion that Mao Tun espoused 'realistic literary theory'. Wellek writes of a latent didacticism in realistic theory:

'In theory completely truthful representation of reality would exclude any kind of social purpose or propaganda. Obviously the theoretical difficulty of realism, its contradictoriness, lies in this very point ... a depiction of contemporary social reality implied a lesson of human pity, of social reformism, and often of rejection and revulsion against society. There is a tension between description and prescription ...'.

153

Mao Tun appeared to accept this contradiction. Furthermore his quest for truth in typicality is also consonant with realist theory, in which the concept of 'type' is very important 'because 'type' constitutes the bridge between the present and the future, the real and the social ideal ...'<sup>154</sup> Type, in spite of its didactic and prescriptive implications, preserves, however, the all-important association with objective social observation. 'Objectivity' is certainly the other main watchword of realism ...<sup>155</sup> something negative, a distrust of subjectivism, of the romantic exaltation of the ego ..."<sup>156</sup>

It is easy to see how, as Mao Tun became increasingly involved directly in political affairs, he gradually developed a preference for realism for its own sake and rejected evolutionary theory and its implications. The seeds of this are already apparent in a short article also published in September 1922 entitled 'Free Creative Writing and Respect for Individuality'. Although he stated his belief here that "freedom in creation should be respected",<sup>157</sup> he also wrote that if a writer insists on denying reality and "insists on saying 世界是太平, he is deceiving himself and others".<sup>158</sup> In other words a certain amount of commitment is the responsibility of writers. They are also to be seen in the short piece immediately following, entitled, simply, '-Isms ...' in which Mao Tun advised young writers to be sincere in their attitude towards the new Western -isms.

"The only way is complete sincerity and a modest attitude when explaining your stand - because if in your heart of hearts you accept this viewpoint, then you should advocate it. If this viewpoint is out of date in world terms, but you feel it suits Chinese needs, then you should not be timid in your advocacy of it. This is the attitude I feel we ought to have towards naturalism in literature and art."

159

One's criteria for advocating a particular school of thought depend completely on one's perception of contemporary needs.

After Mao Tun stepped down from his position as editor-in-chief of HSYP at the end of 1922, his contributions to the journal gradually decreased in number. This was not least due to his increasing involvement in non-literary activities. In the main he concentrated on the introduction and translation of foreign authors and their works. During the whole of 1926 he contributed only one translation, but the following year not only saw an increase in his translation work but also the publication of his first creative work in HSYP, 'Disillusion' ( 幻滅 ), the first part of his trilogy, 'Disillusion, Vacillation, Pursuit'.<sup>160</sup> In a well-known article carried in the October issue of 1928, 'From Kuling to Tokyo',<sup>161</sup> Mao Tun explained his intentions in writing the trilogy:

"At that time I had already decided to write of the experiences of the youth in the high tide of revolution, which can be divided into three periods: (1) the great excitement on the eve of the revolution and the subsequent disillusion when it came about; (2) the vacillation during the violence of the revolutionary struggle; then I thought of writing of (3) the final pursuit after the disillusion and vacillation, and the unwillingness to face up to the loneliness."

162

He clearly expressed his desire objectively to portray the reality of the events of the past few years, events with which he himself had been actively involved. This suggests that his stance had remained more or less constant with views expressed at the end of 1922.



However the article 'From Kuling to Tokyo' marks a turning point in his ideas, for, heavily criticized for not expressing optimism in the revolutionary cause (the article is written in self-defence), he came to the conclusion that it was necessary to espouse 'new realism' after the Soviet model - in his own interpretation, of course.

In one respect his thinking on literature had fundamentally changed since 1922. Whereas at that time Mao Tun had sought to encourage a new national literature which incorporated the thoughts and feelings of the whole of mankind in the particularity of the Chinese context, now considerations of class had become paramount. He wrote:

"... the new literature and art should be proletarian literature and art. But what is proletarian literature and art? It appears that there has not yet been a clear introduction and discussion [of this] ... only according to what I have heard in conversation with friends, it would seem to me that the following points are those which friends who advocate revolutionary literature and art have discussed and agreed upon: (1) opposition to the false attitudes of the petite bourgeoisie and to individualism; (2) collectivism; (3) a spirit of resistance; (4) a tendency towards the model of new realism in the realm of technique ...  
Such a position is incontrovertible ..."

163

Mao Tun had always warned against being "slaves to -isms", completely espousing a particular school of thought without adequate reference to the needs of the Chinese literary scene. He continued to exhibit this balanced view in this article, pointing out that in theory the intention that the new Chinese literature should be a literature of the proletariat was most acceptable, but in practice it was absolutely necessary to relate to the contemporary situation in Chinese literature. Firstly, attempts to create this new literature had unintentionally resulted for the most part in the production of slogan literature:

"Our 'new works' do not intentionally follow the narrow path of 'slogan literature' (標語口號文學) - there are

only the smallest number which do ... There is revolutionary fervour but carelessness with regard to the essence of literature and art, or literature is seen as a propaganda tool - [undeniably incorporating] a strong sense of justice and a readiness to help the weak - or again there are those who, although they do not have this careless tendency, lack artistic accomplishment and unwittingly take this path. Furthermore all along our critics of revolutionary literature and art apparently have not taken steps to guard against this."

164

Mao Tun indicated a fundamental misconception in the orientation of contemporary Chinese literature, namely that the intended readership, the "oppressed and toiling masses" could not understand this literature, written in a "too Europeanized and too 'wen-yenized' pai hua" (太歐化或是太文言化的白話) whilst those who could understand it, the petite bourgeoisie, many of whom were not opposed to the revolution, found it equally unacceptable because of its lack of literary quality.<sup>165</sup>

"Therefore regarding the future place of today's 'new literature and art' - or to put it more bravely 'revolutionary literature and art' - firstly it is necessary to work at guiding it away from young students towards the petite bourgeoisie and the masses, so that it may take root among them."

166

Mao Tun urged that the first step in this process was to orientate literature towards the petite bourgeoisie, so that it reflected their lives, their aspirations, their fears. It was also necessary to simplify the Westernized writing style and avoid extreme didacticism. He went on to advise that the 'new realism' of Soviet Russia should be taken as a model, briefly outlining its development as follows:

"...because life at that time was undergoing tense upheaval, a relaxed and pedantic tone [in literature] was not appropriate, thus naturally a form of literature was produced which accorded with the spiritual tempo and actual difficulties. Thus the paragraphs and sentences of literary works were simplified, there was economy in description of the environment and psychological description, to produce a concise and pithy style which was both right and stimulating ... at first people called it 'telegraph style', later it developed to become new realism..."

Thus new realism did not come about by chance, neither did it come about through a need for a means of expression for the proletariat. A new style of literary and artistic technique was established. If we now transplant it what will happen?"

167

Mao Tun indicated two areas which could be problematical. Firstly to pare down pai hua could result in 'wen-yenization' and secondly, if the language of the social classes described were incorporated into literary works, there was a danger of increased complexity of style, rather than the reverse. These were obviously problems specific to China. Nevertheless he concluded:

"... our descriptive technique must undergo reform and whether or not it is the path of new realism [that we need], a large amount of experimentation is still required."

168

He provided a list of conditions which this literature should fulfil which included:

"... not too much Europeanization, avoidance of the use of too many technical terms, not too much symbolistic colouring, no open, seemingly didactic propagandizing of new ideologies. Although this is what I believe, my own previous works all include these malpractices..."

169

The conclusion of this article has great significance because Mao Tun appears to have found a solution to the problem, in the words of David Pollard, of

'... balancing the call for realistic writing based on personal experience [with] the stress on the need for constructive optimism in literature.'

170

He had previously sought to resolve this in neo-romanticism, but seems to have found satisfaction in new realism. He wrote:

"We must eliminate the pessimistic and dejected atmosphere, we really must not continue with constant howling slogans, we need a fresh spirit, to see reality positively and bravely, to stride ahead and not slide into crudeness and rash anger.

I myself have decided to proceed along this path; the pessimism and depression of 'Pursuit' have been blown away ..."

171

Thus the course of the development of Mao Tun's thinking may be traced from a position at the beginning of the decade when his ultimate preference was for neoromanticism - to which end realism and symbolism could be advocated simultaneously in order to speed up the evolutionary process - which was gradually superceded by an espousal of naturalism in response to the needs of the contemporary Chinese literary scene. At this point neoromanticism had become a remoter goal until eventually Mao Tun lost faith in the force of literary evolution, expressing his dissatisfaction with the most recent trends in Western literary development.<sup>172</sup> Literature for him came to have a class orientation and had to be determined by the context in which it was created. On p. 27 above reference was made to a remark by René Wellek that those who believe in a social determination of literature generally turn to Marxism. In Mao Tun's case it was rather a return to a Marxist interpretation of aesthetics - which he had first studied at the very beginning of the decade - via such philosophies of literary determinism as propounded by Hegel and Taine.

It may also be concluded that Mao Tun in general avoided becoming a 'slave to -isms' during the decade, unlike many of his contemporaries in the field of literary criticism. His insistence on evaluating everything with direct reference to Chinese needs meant that he retained an objective attitude. His literary deliberations were also clearly linked to his study of foreign literature from whence his inspiration came. This relationship is explored in the following chapter.

With regard to the whole issue of realism in literature I would

like to give the last word to René Wellek:

'The theory of realism is ultimately bad aesthetics because all art is "making" and is a world in itself of illusion and symbolic forms.'

173

### CHAPTER 3

#### PART I : Foreign Literature - the reconciliation of national and universal concerns

The translation and introduction of Western literature was an important part of the work of contributors to HSYP. In the 'Manifesto of Reform',<sup>1</sup> Western literature figured prominently: there was to be a complete section devoted to translation, 'Collected Translation'

(譯叢) in order to:

"... translate the work of celebrated Western writers, not being restricted to a single country or a single school." 2

The fifth section entitled 'Special Articles' (特載) was established in the expectation that:

"...fellow countrymen will express their views on creative writing, and also introduce new Western theories in order to help our emulation of the West." 3

The importance of this work with regard to elevating and reforming the status of modern Chinese literature and art is clear:

"... in the attempt to reform literature today, we will not only work at the imitation of Western literature, but will in fact create a New Chinese Literature and Art and fulfil our duty of making a contribution to the world ... in preparing our research, the further back it goes, and the more comprehensive and wide-ranging it is, the better will be the results; it is also necessary for no matter which opposing philosophies all to be researched." 4

The aim of the study and introduction to China of foreign literature was first and foremost to create a new Chinese literature, but it was recognized that there was need of a great deal of hard research.

Bonnie McDougall lists some characteristics of 'May Fourth Literature':

'Pride in internationalism, enthusiasm for the recent and the very new in literature, concern for the literatures of smaller countries in the Western World and beyond it, a tendency toward synthesis in regard to literary schools ...'<sup>5</sup>

Concern with 'smaller countries' is discussed below, but the remaining characteristics are all apparent in these extracts from the 'Manifesto...' Most importantly, it was China's responsibility to contribute to world literature:

'...influenced by Western universalistic thinking, he [the contemporary Chinese writer] saw himself as an heir to world literature, which he should reveal to his fellow Chinese and advance by his own contributions.'

6

References to Western literature in the 'Manifesto' were taken up by Mao Tun in the same issue in his article 'The Relationship of Literature to Man and the Old Chinese Misconception of the Writer's Position'.<sup>7</sup> As shown in Chapter 2, the question which preoccupied Mao Tun in this article was the following:

"Why has a Chinese national literature hitherto not been established, and why has it not been able to develop in the same way as [in] all Western countries?"

8

For an answer he looked to the course of evolution of world literature, and by including Chinese literature within the evolutionary framework of world literature, Mao Tun indicated his belief in the universality of literature. He continued:

"Life depicted by writers should be the life of all mankind... Naturally the people in literary works ... have thoughts and feelings: but these thoughts and feelings must be those of the masses, those of the whole of mankind..."

9

Such literature would be "human literature (人的文學) - genuine literature (真的文學)." However, this "human literature" had a universal and a national context.

"...[it] is the literature of the language of one country at a time before world language has become standardized."

10

Thus the responsibility of the writer is

"...to develop a national people's literature in his own country, and in worldwide terms he must unite and promote world literature."

11

This is asserted by Mao Tun in the passionate conviction that

(in Gálik's translation):

"...works of literature ... are a single means of unifying the feelings of the whole of mankind and mediating the woes and cries of man, and through this the races of the world can join in harmony."

12

At this idealistic and optimistic time of the relaunching of the HSYF and the founding of the Society for Literary Studies, no awareness is indicated here of the possible underlying contradiction between the simultaneous promotion of both nationalism and universalism in literature. Logically, the espousal of literary universality implies the denial of nationalistic tendencies. Obviously this is not a concern specific to Mao Tun, and can be defined in general terms as a belief in "inter-nationalism" rather than cosmopolitanism. That is, each country within a family of nations would make its own unique contribution to a world culture.<sup>13</sup>

In a second article, 'The Duties and Efforts of Researchers of the New Literature',<sup>14</sup> Mao Tun expanded on this:

"As it gradually evolves, literature is better able to depict the life of all mankind at the time, to express its feelings, to manifest its sufferings and hopes, and cry out in rigorous opposition against an unknown fate on its behalf. However, at the present time national boundaries and language differences have not been completely wiped out and the ultimate aim cannot be achieved at a stroke. For this reason new literary movements are inevitably strongly national in character; for example the new literary movements of the Jews and the Irish which justly demand the sympathies of men throughout the world. The new Chinese literary movement should have the same character."

15



Mao Tun made clear at the beginning of this article that remarks pertaining to the introduction of Western literature within it were not so commonly held. Thus at this time, his personal view tended towards the idealistic "ultimate aim" ( 最終的目的 ) of universality. The question of realization depends on the intended meaning of "new literary movements" ( 新文學運動 ), and, mindful of the examples cited, this is well expressed as 'the new literature of emerging countries'.<sup>16</sup> One of the basic aims of the Society for Literary Studies was to raise the status of Chinese literature and the Chinese writer, in this context it may therefore be suggested that not until the status of the new literature of emerging countries gained parity with that of established nations might the achievement of "ultimate aim" be possible.

Mao Tun continued: "The task of making Western literature accessible is to introduce its literary art and contemporary world thinking. To this last aim more attention must be paid."<sup>17</sup> By stressing the latter more than the former he tended towards subordinating art to theory in the context of the aims of the new literary movement. Furthermore in the same context he advised selectivity in translating.<sup>18</sup> Mao Tun remained faithful to the spirit of the 'Manifesto' by explaining his advice as a matter of economic expediency.<sup>19</sup> As regards translation technique Mao Tun urged the study of the background and social environment of the author in order to gain an insight into the true spirit of the work. He also recommended specialization to enable this to be successfully carried out,<sup>20</sup> although his concern was the creation of a new literature by learning from Western literature, the process of whose introduction he deemed to some extent completed.<sup>21</sup>

Specialization, the decision as to what was "essential reading" (不可不讀的), naturally depended upon one's conception of the function and character of literature and what would provide the key to the construction of a new Chinese literature. As can be seen above, in his writing in the first half of 1921 Mao Tun advocated a "humanistic idealism"<sup>22</sup> but his views on literary theory were not static. As shown in Chapter 2, by July 1921, with the publication of HSYP of the article 'The Social Background and Creation',<sup>23</sup> Mao Tun began to explore the idea that literature should be considered in terms of social and environmental factors. In these terms, the literature of the so-called 'oppressed nations' was favourable as an example to China:

"Overall I feel that genuine literature is literature which expresses the life of society, literature which is related to mankind; in oppressed countries, it is even more important to pay attention to social background."

24

His only previous mention of the literature of any of these nations in general articles (in HSYP) was that of Jewish and Irish literatures in the article 'Duties and Efforts of Students of the New Literature'. Mao Tun's assertion that these strongly nationalistic literatures "justly demand the sympathy of all mankind" emphasized their appeal to the universal feelings of mankind; the point was not that the Jewish and Irish peoples were living in oppressive circumstances as such, but that, through whatever circumstances, they were made to endure suffering. The February article urged that the new Chinese literature should follow this example because the Chinese, as part of 'mankind' (全体人類) could feel empathy with the sentiments expressed. This initial position suggests a view of art as a direct expression of emotion, which is not dissimilar to the views of the

Creationists in the first phase of their literary development. It must be seen in a context where the ideal concept of the universality of human feeling could inspire belief in a world where there was no domination by a particular class or race, at a time when the opposite was generally institutionalized and taken as the acceptable norm. By July the emphasis had subtly shifted to the shared social background of China and other oppressed (European) countries. The said article first put forward the proposition that "a certain kind of social background produces a certain kind of literature",<sup>25</sup> and proceeded to evaluate it in terms of the literature of oppressed peoples, ( 被迫害的民族 ) which will "always give greater expression to the pathological thinking of cruelty, anger etc."<sup>26</sup> In a brief general description, Mao Tun showed that under various types of oppression, the peoples of Russia, Poland, Hungary and the Jews produced literary works with similar traits, namely the evocation in the reader of strong feelings of sympathy for the oppressed and the universal weaknesses of mankind. He laid significant stress on the situation of the Hungarian people:

"They are not like the Russians who had to fight for their freedom from their own cruel gentry within their own country, they are not like the Poles and Jews who do not have their own homeland."

27

Indeed, "ever since Hungary had been under Turkish domination until the present time there has not been a day when it has not been encroached upon by another people."<sup>28</sup> The similarity with China's own situation presumably would not have passed unnoticed by the readership of HSYP. (In fact contemporary China's plight could be seen as an amalgamation of all four examples cited.) Mao Tun pointed out the general similarity of China's position and urged that because

China found itself in troubled times its creative writing should be a reflection of those times.

In this article, being typically polemical, the change in attitude is overemphasized, a second article, 'The Way Forward for Creative Writing',<sup>29</sup> also in the July issue concludes thus:

"I feel that the mission of literature is to voice the melancholy of modern man and to help men rid themselves of the tendencies and weaknesses all inherit from thousands of years of history; to enable the mutual communication of feelings ...; to cause the imperceptible barriers between men to be gradually extinguished. The background of literature should be the background of all mankind, the feelings expressed should be those of all humanity. Only, because men in the world today still cannot be purely men of the world, and still retain a certain amount of their national character, creative literary works inevitably retain the appeal of that country, and the background reflected also inevitably tends more towards that country. But the feelings expressed must always be universal: this is what today's creative writers should pay attention to."

30

Just as Gálík insists on placing horizontally Mao Tun's 'absurd' statements regarding the definition of literature to produce an impossible equation,<sup>31</sup> so it is possible to extract from the above various approaches to China's relations with foreign literature and to the reconciliation between the opposing tendencies of nationalism and universalism. That a strongly nationalistic literature should be created in order that its depiction of the life and feelings of all mankind would lead to the extinguishing of the barriers between peoples, is clearly unsatisfactory. Emphasis on the reflection of social background is equally so while directly linked to the aim of engaging universal sympathy, whilst concentration on the mutual communication of feelings expressly at the expense of national characteristics is not acceptable to an emerging nation and national literature.

Thus can be seen the dilemma of the builders of a new Chinese literature. A new literature had to be approached through the scientific method which for Mao Tun came to find expression in his advocacy of an objective description of reality, hence his conviction expressed, for example, in 'The Way Forward for Creative Writing' that "literature is a reflection of society, a picture of the social background".<sup>32</sup> From this it follows that literature should possess an expressly Chinese character. However modern science also provided theories of evolution which expressed man's relationship with his world in terms of the individual's position as one among mankind. In this light literature should be universal: indeed China had a responsibility to contribute to world literature according to the 'Manifesto'.

At the beginning of his literary career Mao Tun was greatly influenced by L.N. Tolstoy, especially his advocacy of the universality of art in 'What is Art?'. 'In the first half of 1919 Mao Tun was actually convinced that Tolstoy's influence would spread all over the world, finally resulting in the "great reform". This reform was to embrace, of course, also art. Art comprehensible to everyone would become victorious.'<sup>33</sup> By 1921 the influence of Tolstoy is still apparent, up to a point, in such articles as, for example, 'The Relationship of Literature to Man and the Old Chinese Misconception of the Writer's Position', despite the fact that he no longer espoused the greater part of Tolstoy's views. In this article even some of the turns of phrase are very reminiscent of 'What is Art?'. For example, Tolstoy says:

'Art is ... a means of union among men, joining them together

in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and progress towards the well-being of the individual and of humanity.'

34

Although Tolstoy evaluated art in the light of his own religious perceptions, and, as Gálík has noted 'Mao Tun probably never was a protagonist of "religious perception"',<sup>35</sup> it is likely that one or two years previously the Tolstoyan concept of universal art which unites all mankind as propounded in 'What is Art?' was especially appealing to him. However by 1921 in Mao Tun's articles a major divergence from the position in 'What is Art?' is apparent. A particular instance is Mao Tun's call for the construction of a strongly nationalistic literature for China, which would have been anathema to Tolstoy. In 'What is Art?' all patriotic art is criticized thus:

'...while uniting some people together, [it] makes that very union a cause of separation between these united people and others: so that union of this kind is often a source, not only of division, but even of enmity towards others.'

36

Furthermore Tolstoy also opposed exclusiveness in art, in the sense of the inclusion of detailed reference to time and place:

'...it is ... impossible in modern literature to indicate works fully satisfying the demands of universality. Such works as exist are, to a great extent, spoilt by what is usually called "realism", but would be better termed "provincialism" in art.'

37

Such a view runs counter to Mao Tun's demand that literature should be a reflection of the social background of the time. One recalls Mao Tun's criticism of traditional Chinese literature in 'The Relationship of Literature to Man ...', namely that such literature "was remote from mankind and remote from the age".<sup>38</sup> Tolstoy criticized contemporary European literature and art in similar terms for being elitist and irrelevant.

It was through his approach to the literature of 'the oppressed

peoples' that Mao Tun attempted to reconcile these conflicting trends. The **最後一頁** column of the June 1921 issue announced among other changes of editorial policy, that henceforth special attention was to be paid to the literatures of small and oppressed peoples in the form of translations and introductory articles.<sup>39</sup> This announcement was followed in October by an issue devoted solely to the literature of oppressed peoples, which carried a foreword 'by a reporter'.<sup>40</sup> "Why study the literature of oppressed peoples?"<sup>41</sup> it asked.

The foreword begins its reply by reasserting the importance of national character in literature:

"The literature of a people is the expression of its national character, the product of the historical and social background and of the thought tide of the times... A people's real inner essence can only be sought out from its literary works."

42

However all nations must be seen as equal members of earth's family, therefore the literatures of all people have equal worth:

"All peoples on earth are sons of mother earth; there is not one who deserves to be particularly badly treated, nor one who can consider himself particularly favoured. Therefore the crystallized essence of all peoples should be equally treasured, should be regarded as a treasure of all mankind. Moreover in the world of art there is no division between noble and lowly."

43

The emphasis on the equal standing of nations and their literatures and the belief that national barriers, language barriers etc. between men could be overcome through mutual respect marked a development in Mao Tun's approach away from the view that all should somehow be merged into that nebulous entity called world literature. In previous articles he did not make a clear statement of this view although it could have been implied, as shown above. It would appear

that having grown to accept a naturalistic approach to the creation of a new indigenous literature by mid-1921, a readjustment was needed when looking outward onto a world perspective. In this respect the literature of oppressed peoples could provide a key: not only was it the case that by asserting their national identity in literature they could assert their position as equal members of earth's family, but because of the nature of their social background, the depth of the emotions expressed represented a genuineness of human feelings which, it seemed, an unoppressive social background could not produce. Thereby they transcended the confines of a national literature to inspire all mankind. In all this such literature was a particular example to China:

"... the oppressed and subordinated soul moves us because we ourselves are also sorrowful at our similar sacrifice to the inequitable traditional thought system. The oppressed soul which remains elevated moves us more because this enables us to believe more strongly that there is pure gold within the gravel of human nature, and that the dark recesses of the way forward will be bright."

44

Mao Tun had indicated his belief in the utilitarian function of literature to inspire social change since July 1921, as can be seen in 'The Way Forward for Creative Writing'.<sup>45</sup> A realistic description of life and society as it was would of itself promote change through the expression of genuine human feelings: so the "way forward" should be understood in this context. The oppressed peoples were far better able to 'move men' through their literature because of the harsh reality of their lives. The importance of this literature for China was not only its ability to unite mankind in its opposition to the oppression of the human spirit in a broad perspective, but its political and social force within the nation by which it could raise



the awareness of the population. However it is important to stress that such a force remained completely within the confines of artistic form. In September 1922 in an article entitled 'Literature and Political Society',<sup>46</sup> Mao Tun expressed concern at the lack of understanding of these ideas by "those intoxicated by the independence of art".<sup>47</sup> The reason for literature's tendency towards political and social concerns could be "proved from the facts" as "the extremely great influence of the environment upon the writer."<sup>48</sup>

The "facts" which Mao Tun turned to for proof were the literary realities, as he understood them, of several small and/or oppressed nations. "Was not [the content of] nineteenth century Russian literature almost all social and political?"<sup>49</sup> - because literature was the only means by which to express dissatisfaction in a society which was not free. All experienced the extremes of the Russian decline so writers could not fail to include something of this in their works. Of Hungarian literature it had been said that the history of Hungarian literature was the history of Hungarian politics. Since this was the history of a bloody war for independence and freedom, literature was directly used as a tool to propagandize the people's revolution.<sup>50</sup> Similar examples were also cited from Bohemian theatre and Bulgarian poetry but above all Norway provided 'proof' of the direct relationship between environment and literary content.

"At the end of the nineteenth century there was not one Norwegian man of letters who was not passionate about political and social issues..."

but when Norway became independent:

". . .there was a change in direction in the guiding principles of Norwegian literature."

As to the nature of this change, Mao Tun did not elucidate further in this brief article. Chinese literature still had to grasp the importance of environment and social background. Indeed, throughout his time as editor of HSYP, Mao Tun emphasized the mediocrity of the majority of works submitted to HSYP for appraisal - the 'New Chinese Literature' was still not a reality. And even if attempts to capture the social background were effected they were often shallow and subjective. Thus the important first step was commitment as exemplified by the oppressed peoples: "if a writer denies reality and just says 世界是太平, he is deceiving himself and others".<sup>52</sup> But this was inadequate without a formal framework in which to work, such that the superficiality and subjectivity of many contemporary works could be eliminated. It is ironic that in these two articles of September 1922 Mao Tun had to defend his conception of the utilitarian function of literature by asserting that it did not threaten the independence of art whilst later he was accused by the same group of allowing the standards of artistic form to impede the social message.

Thus it can be seen that by late 1922, Mao Tun had come to favour an evaluation of literary content in terms of a social and political background of national character. Nevertheless, it was necessary to look beyond this context for the means of expression. Simultaneously Chinese literature had to come within the evolutionary framework of world literature. During his time as editor, Mao Tun periodically expressed his belief in the evolution of literature and its capacity for continual self-improvement. He favoured neo-romanticism as the means of expression which should be adopted by the New Literature, and urged that Chinese literature should experience its own evolution

in order to catch up with the mainstream of literature. Only then could the neo-romantic approach be adopted.

"We must understand that we have no foundation for the New Literature everyone is talking about nowadays - the roots and shoots come completely from foreign lands ... If we accept that modern world literature must influence a future new Chinese literature - in other words that a new Chinese literature must join the road of world literature - then it is necessary for us also to develop the 'isms' already developed along the evolutionary road of Western literature, especially naturalism ..."

53

Naturalism was the means to neo-romanticism, a course of development which the small and oppressed nations especially of Europe had already followed. Their example was not only significant as a guide along the evolutionary path - the mainstream of Western writers from which Chinese writers had to learn, were already reasonably available in translation - but as fellow future contributors to developments in world literature.

A significant proportion of Mao Tun's contributions to the translation work of HSYP was devoted to the study of the literatures of 'small and oppressed nations', which is indicative of the importance to Chinese literature which he accorded them. His own translations and essays reveal a choice of those authors who combined a naturalistic or post-naturalistic approach with a depth and sensitivity of content which he considered inspirational to mankind. The implication is that the future direction of world literature rested with these peoples - including the Chinese - who would create a synthesis of the best of 'Western' methods and their unrivalled humanity.<sup>54</sup>

PART II : The Literature of 'small and oppressed peoples'  
- Four examples

'Translation from world literature was ... the reaffirmation of particularism within universalism'.<sup>55</sup> Such is Irene Eber's evaluation of the attitude of Chou Tso-jen towards translation. Central to this view is the intention to stimulate the creation of a valid new Chinese literature whose significance was its 'human orientation'. It should be 'human literature (人的文學)':

'If Chinese writers, in creating new literature, accepted the centrality of human beings - the lives, joys, sorrows, or aspirations of common people - they would be writing in a particular way about particular Chinese, as others were doing elsewhere. Therefore, by wanting Chinese literature to be in and a part of the world, Chou necessarily went on to stress the importance of translating from world literature. Universality was knowing and understanding the particularity of others ... The importance of "human literature" lies in its concern with universal experiences of men and women. By translating foreign literature, Chinese will understand the lives of humankind ...'

56

As seen above, Mao Tun also emphasized the importance of human life, the feelings of all mankind in literature. For example it is precisely the lack of regard for humanity in traditional Chinese literature which he criticized in 'The Relationship of Literature to Man...':

"... the ancient writers of literature were only aware of the ancient philosophical teachings of the sages and were not aware of the common feelings of mankind."

57

Influenced by such writers as Moulton and Tolstoy, Mao Tun, like many others, early on came to incorporate Chou Tso-jen's concept of a literature of humanity into the framework of his own literary views, and used the term as his own. However, rather than simply to 'understand the particularity of others', for Mao Tun extending one's

horizons to embrace the fate of all mankind through translation - and in particular through the translation of the literature of oppressed peoples - had a direct relation with the particularity of one's own context. An 'understanding of the lives of humankind' was in turn to be the inspiration for active change; for such an understanding would bring about a clearer comprehension of one's own situation, and thereby the capacity to take active steps to change it. The inspiration sought by Chou Tso-jen was of a different sort: his hope was that the translation of foreign works would 'nurture the morality of man'.<sup>58</sup> Thus although both looked to world literature to change attitudes, Chou Tso-jen emphasized the reflective level, while Mao Tun looked to the tangible results of such reflection. Nevertheless the notion of affirming particularism within universalism through translation is a valid one here, for in this section I hope to show how Mao Tun made use of the literature of oppressed peoples to affirm the construction of a new national Chinese literature within a world context. This necessarily involves an evaluation of the motives behind his selection of available material both (a) in accordance with the nature of the social backgrounds of the peoples concerned and their relevance to the climate and background of the China which was the vantage point from which Mao Tun made his judgements, and (b) in accordance with the course of development he believed the new Chinese literature should take, mindful of the evolution of Mao Tun's own literary views, and his consequent reappraisal of the direction in which it should proceed. His own views of the importance and methods of translation will also be taken into account.

During the years 1921 to 1929, Mao Tun published in HSYP translations of works from the following countries: Armenia, Bosnia,

Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Germany, Portugal, Greece, Spain, Brazil, Chile, and from Jewish literature. There are also introductory articles to particular literatures and critical articles on particular writers or literary trends which also belong in this category of works concerned with world literature. Although some of these countries are only represented by the translation of one or two short stories or one collection of poetry, such a list certainly testifies to Mao Tun's unrelenting efforts to introduce the literatures of the world to the Chinese reading public. There is also immediately apparent a definite inclination towards small countries and oppressed peoples, which suggests an underlying motive in selection. In order to investigate this further there follows a detailed study of Mao Tun's treatment of four representative literatures to which he devoted rather more attention. These are the literatures of Poland, Hungary, Norway and of the Jewish people, the main criterion for this choice being the actual amount of translation and evaluatory work devoted to each of them by Mao Tun in HSYP. He most certainly was the motivating force behind the interest shown by HSYP in works specifically from small and oppressed countries.<sup>59</sup> The number of such translations in HSYP noticeably declines after Mao Tun stepped down from his position as editor-in-chief, nevertheless he maintained his own personal interest in the subject. This is witnessed by the articles of evaluation and translations by him which continued to appear in HSYP until as late as 1929, by which time he had turned his attention to creative writing.

In the political and intellectual climate of China in the 1920s 'writers as intellectuals assumed the role of political and social critics, exponents of change, and often became political activists'.<sup>60</sup>

For this reason their work necessarily reflected their political and social preoccupations - the weak position of China in the world, apathy among the Chinese people, the need to revive a nationalistic and patriotic spirit and concomitantly the need for cultural change. Of course Mao Tun was no exception, indeed he was a prominent example, and, in common with others, he shared the belief in the power of literature to bring about the realization of such aspirations:

"... all the important problems of the present day must be expressed in literature; and not only should they be expressed but the nonchalant should be guided towards the bright road in order that new trust and ideals may swell in their hearts once again."

61

Furthermore as Irene Eber notes,<sup>62</sup> at this time, the authors were also the translators, therefore ideological concerns necessarily determined much of what was translated. It is on such grounds that a study of Mao Tun's contribution to the work of introduction and translation in the 1920s in China may be justified, despite views such as those expressed by M. Gálík who contends that the

'...original aim had simply been to introduce (European) literature, and in all probability they are not based on any deeper knowledge of the life and works of the authors concerned or of the literatures in question.'

63

Both Gálík's assumptions belie Mao Tun's attitude towards the question of the translation of literary works, which seemed to preoccupy him during the first few months of 1921, as this, one of the avowed aims of the Society for Literary Studies, began to be put into practice through the pages of HSYF. Further to the discussion of the article 'The Duties and Efforts of Researchers of the New Literature',<sup>64</sup> where it was pointed out that Mao Tun urged the study of the background and social environment of the author involved in order to gain an insight into the spirit of the work, he also urged that:

"a translator must have the knowledge of a critic, he must have a complete understanding of literature."<sup>65</sup> This is because

"In almost every work of a great writer, his individuality is reflected; work after work reflects the circumstances of every period throughout his life. If one did not have a deep knowledge of this author's life and of the special characteristics of his work, then it would be most dangerous to translate it."

66

Hence the need for specialization:

"Therefore, when translating the works of a particular author, at the very least one must have read the literary history of that writer's country, a biography of the writer, and critical works about that author, [only] after that ... will one not introduce false literature. If one is to proceed in this way, it would be best for one who concentrates his research on the literature of one country or one author to do the translation."

67

It is I believe not such a naive assumption that Mao Tun would have followed his own advice as far as he could and as far as available materials permitted. Indeed, further investigation reveals this to be generally the case, as we shall see.

In his article 'A Discussion of the Method of Translating Literary Texts'<sup>68</sup> Mao Tun also provided a set of basic rules for the guidance of translators on the actual mechanics of translation. This dealt with how to translate slang, metaphor, the arrangement of sentences in relation to the original and so on. As W. Ayers points out:

'... such homilies may seem commonplace but they are significant as apparently the first serious attention that China's intelligentsia had ever given to the problem of translation.'

69

Presumably Ayers is referring to the problem of translation in a modern context, incorporating the scientific method (for if taken in absolute terms this judgement becomes absurd). In any case much perception on the part of Mao Tun with regard to the problems of



translation is revealed in these articles at a time when this subject was not a major preoccupation in literary circles, although it was soon to become so, at times to a fanatical degree.

Despite Mao Tun's sincere call for extensive research into the background of the author one was to translate, a Chinese translator's efforts might well be thwarted to a certain extent by inadequate news reporting especially of less prominent countries, which Eber found to be 'neither comprehensive nor up to date'.<sup>70</sup> However the events of the First World War did bring to general attention the plight of many small European countries and this, coupled with the rapid expansion of the Chinese press and a growing Chinese nationalism which demanded an ever more precise view of the West,<sup>71</sup> points to the general conclusion that one should assume an adequate knowledge of the political background of most countries whose literatures they were studying on the part of the majority of serious literary scholars. How much more is this the case with Mao Tun whose unrelenting capacity for research was positively daunting, and whose own attitude is expressed in the introduction to an article entitled 'A Picture of the Backgrounds of the Literatures of Oppressed Peoples', in the issue devoted to these literatures, October 1921.<sup>72</sup>

"In order to understand the special characteristics of the literature of a particular people, one must have a certain amount of knowledge both of the history of that people and of the social background; as the majority of the oppressed peoples introduced in this issue are unfamiliar, I intend to provide 'miniatures' of their 'literary backgrounds'.

In these miniatures I shall pay particular attention to the following points ...:

1. ethnic group (the inherited characteristics of the people)
2. particular characteristics which have arisen out of oppression

3. special environment - (the influence of the natural and the social background)."

73

Before going on to provide brief 'miniatures' of the backgrounds of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Finland, the Ukraine, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, he indicated the importance he accorded to a knowledge of background in an apology that there was neither time nor space to treat the above three points in detail. Of course the situation of Poland, for example, was very much more familiar to concerned Chinese who had followed developments closely, aware that a similar fate, i.e. partition, might have been in store for China.

The portrayal of social injustice, oppression and so on in the literature of these peoples, which appeals to the sensibilities of 'all mankind', is an important motivating factor in the choice of this literature for particular study. Its connection with an upsurge of national consciousness in such peoples, and the relationship between national literature, language reform and the promotion of the use of the vernacular should also be taken into account. This relationship figures prominently in the development of the literature in all four examples - although the question of new Jewish literature in both Hebrew and Yiddish is more complex - and plays an important role in moves towards greater literacy among the people and the consequent reassertion of national identity. These concerns were undoubtedly still exceedingly relevant in China in the nineteen twenties. Even though the battle for the use of pai hua in schools had already been won, 'both the use of the vernacular and the writing of literature were seen as cultural and political activities aimed at changing Chinese society',<sup>74</sup> just as they were for Poles, Jews, Hungarians and Norwegians, and others.

(1) Polish Literature

Whereas my choice of Mao Tun's treatment of Jewish, Norwegian and Hungarian literature in HSYF was predominantly dictated by the actual number of articles devoted to each, the case of Polish literature is somewhat different. In HSYF from 1921 - 1930 there are only two articles by Mao Tun specifically devoted to Polish literature. The first is 'Poland's Present-day Notable Writer Sienkiewicz',<sup>75</sup> and the second, written some eight years later, 'The Last Twenty Years of Polish Literature'.<sup>76</sup> However the particular situation of Poland vis à vis China sheds interesting light on the question of the relationship between social background and "oppressed" literature. Also, these two articles contain views which are very relevant to the study of this literature as a whole.

Because of the importance which Mao Tun accorded to political and social background, it is first necessary to be aware of the situation of Poland in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, knowledge which it is assumed Mao Tun would have possessed. This assumption is particularly likely to be valid in the case of Poland, because of the concern felt for its plight in China, as early as 1873.<sup>77</sup>

Poland as a state did not exist after the three territorial divisions of Poland, perpetrated by Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1772, 1793 and 1795.

'Poland for practical purposes consisted of three frontier regions of three great states, which were often reluctant to develop them ... The absurd situation arose that the

Poles, who thought of themselves as a nation were treated as troublesome minorities in three empires.'

78

In Austrian Poland (Galicia), which was just a farflung province of the Habsburg empire, there operated a system of local diets which sent representation to the central Reichstrat. However the system was totally dominated by ultra-conservative Polish landlords and the Catholic church whose attitudes were equally reactionary. Both remained loyal to the Austrian authorities to safeguard their own interests against the peasants. Whereas the existence of polonism was tolerated by Austria because it did not constitute any kind of threat, in Prussian Poland (Posen, Silesia etc.) an active policy of germanization was pursued especially in the second half of the nineteenth century 'to remove this seemingly dangerous foreign element in what ought to be a wholly German state'.<sup>80</sup> The German system of education forced Poles to learn German and in 1887 the teaching of Polish even in primary schools was prohibited. Later measures included the dispossession of Poles, the encouragement of the settlement of German peasants in 'Polish' areas and a general advocacy of 'germanism'<sup>81</sup> which forced Poles to become Germans if they were to live full and successful lives. The position of Poles under Russian domination was not dissimilar. Until 1863 the Kingdom of Poland had been administered by the Poles themselves, but after the failure of the rising of 1863-4, this part of Poland was totally annexed into the Russian Empire and ruled directly from St. Petersburg. The intention was one of 'russification' - 'the business of the administration, the courts and even of the communes was conducted in Russian'.<sup>82</sup> Also after 1869 the only university education available was in Russian.<sup>83</sup> Poles shared the resentment of their Russian fellows towards the autocracy and oppression of the Tsarist regime.

Judging from sources quoted by Irene Eber<sup>84</sup> there seems to have been a greater general awareness of the situation of Poles under Russian rule, however in his outlining of the situation of Poland in two articles in 1921 (in HSYP) such niceties of detail as the varying degrees of oppression in the different areas of Poland, are not included by Mao Tun. For example, in 'The Social Background and Creation' the usual generalization is made:

"... they have not even a homeland, and suffering day after day the cruel oppression of strong peoples, their literature has even more of a special character."

85

Mao Tun emphasized that an understanding of the social background was important because of its influence on the literature produced. However despite his inclination towards the literature of peoples who lived under conditions of oppression, the example of his treatment of Poland indicates that the socio-political background per se could not be the overriding motivating factor in the selection of a particular literature for study. If this were the case, Mao Tun would have emphasized more particularly the details of the suppression of Polish identity and the superficial similarities between the fact of partition in Poland and the pressure under which China found herself. That he does not fall into the trap is indicative of Mao Tun's perspicacious attitude towards the study of this category of literature, and the example it could provide for China. It is indeed an "understanding of the particularity of others" which does not directly equate the particular problems of one group of mankind with those of another and attempt a solution on a universal basis notwithstanding the kinship felt with that group. Background was important for the way literature was shaped by it:

'The lesson was an obvious one: political calamity can effect

positive cultural assertion through the medium of literature'

86

and when this occurred China should learn from it. Such is the idea expressed in the introductory paragraph of the article 'Poland's Present Day Notable Writer Sienkiewicz'. Mao Tun stressed the way Poles and Jews had reasserted themselves in literature which was all the more inspirational in the light of the particularly adverse nature of their socio-political backgrounds:

"These two ancient peoples have long since lost their position on the map of Europe, yet in the history of world learning, not only have the Jews often manifested the magnificence of their people, but the Polish people also are unwilling to be left behind; the results of their endeavours are new theories and ideals which astound the whole epoch ... Moreover if Poland or Judea are to exist once again in people's mental conception of the world, then everything depends on the ability of writers from these two peoples to express the thoughts and lives of their own people in their own language. As far as this type of writer is concerned, we must respect him and understand him, regardless of whether his contribution to world literature is great or small."

87

Mao Tun particularly admired the way Poles and Jews had, despite both being peoples without a homeland, forged an identity for themselves through literature. These literatures which had suddenly arisen in the literary world in the second half of the nineteenth century<sup>88</sup> were an embodiment of national character because writers focussed on their own people and used their own language. Indeed, although Mao Tun is positively inspired by the fact that not only did these peoples regain a literary identity but actually took a lead in world literature, he considered the factor of the expression of national consciousness in literature so important that he urged that writers who sought to achieve this in their works should still be respected for their endeavours, whether or not their achievements were of world-shattering proportions. 'No comparable literature was being produced in China,

as Mao Tun stressed repeatedly'.<sup>89</sup> Hence his call to young aspiring Chinese writers to "go among the people" (到民間去).<sup>90</sup> It would appear that he considered the example of Sienkiewicz a particularly good one in this respect because he considered him to have successfully encapsulated the national character in his work which at the same time retained its universal appeal:

"In Sienkiewicz's works are expressed the stupidity and honesty, the perversity and craftiness of his fellow countrymen, and apart from sympathy for the oppressed, he also identifies and lays bare the universal weaknesses of mankind."

91

In this article in 1921 Mao Tun appears to be emphasizing the need for particularism in literature, even at the risk of provincialism and of producing works which would not readily appeal on a universal level. In 1929 in 'The Last Twenty Years of Polish Literature' he expressed similar views, criticizing the post-war trend in Polish literature towards universalism at the expense of nationalism:

"... in terms of the thought tide of the literary background, before the war it was nationalism\* (民族主義), after the war it is universalism\* (世界主義). The structure of a new independent Polish state - even if it is a flimsy structure, has, it seems, already caused young writers to lose the ardent nationalistic thought of their predecessor generation; indeed they feel they ought to study the broad vision of the world and now do not deserve to be called people of a 'free' country."

92

He continued:

"After the blood bath of the First World War, Poland, under the diplomatic manoeuvres of the big powers, became an independent state with self-respect ... But because Poland had already become an 'independent state' her younger writers felt that the pre-war poets' esteem of nationalism was no longer in tune with the times ... Polish people, who were already 'free', ought to broaden their horizons, and better fulfil their contribution to world culture'."

93

Mao Tun cited the example of Kasproicz who

\* English supplied in the original text

"... at the present time now that Poland is already independent, clearly he is able to avoid being restricted by the bounds of nationalism and national suffering, and have a world perspective. It broaches the essential question of the interrelations of all mankind which new young Polish poets are going wild about ... at the moment."

94

At first sight it appears that Mao Tun had rejected his own assertions at the beginning of the decade regarding the importance of the social background as the force which shapes literature, in the way he bemoans the 'world perspective' espoused by the new generation of Polish writers, despite the political changes which had taken place. However his pessimism, especially apparent in the concluding paragraph of the article, suggests an unexpected understanding of the reality of the Polish situation:

"After the Great War examples of the upsurge of new movements in literature in Europe - the proletarian literature of new realism, are not to be found in Poland. Even compared to before Polish literature still in fact lags behind - ardent feelings of nationalism have been suppressed by the situation of false 'independence'. Can young Polish writers under the autocratic regime of General Pilsudski perceive a new way forward in their so-called 'universalistic' aspirations? Although the future cannot be known, even now it has to be said that there is little hope."

95

After all did not Poland, like China, need to rely on strongly patriotic feelings in its endeavours to 'recreate itself as a nation state'?<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore Mao Tun had himself bemoaned the apathy towards the new trends of the young generation in China at the beginning of the decade<sup>97</sup> and was doubtless aware of the continuing similarity between the situation of Poland, and that of China, under its own military dictator. Thus far from denying the interrelation of social background and literary character, he seems to have become more preoccupied with the link between the two at this time. However, much of his earlier optimism seems to have left him as the example of Poland did



not live up to his earlier expectations.

The situation which existed in Poland at the time Mao Tun was writing was one which lent an illusory sense of self-reliance. After the creation of the new Poland after World War I, Poles felt stronger than they were because of the coincidental collapse of the two imperial powers and the revolution in Russia. Thus the new literature produced reflected this general false sense of security in its inclination towards introspection and lyricism. However in the light of China's own experience Mao Tun necessarily had to mistrust these outward signs as belying the true situation. His evaluation of literature could not be carried out in an artistic and aesthetic vacuum as R.F. Leslie's is:

"While on the one hand the desire for independence remained, on the other interest moved towards artistic forms and concepts. To some extent the movement away from the central theme of national liberation indicates that a silent victory had been won. Polish writers, poets and dramatists had preserved a national tradition, from which a shift to normality in the sense that literary criticism, the theatre, poesy, and all forms of artistic expression no longer centred upon the question of national identity, indicated a basic national self-confidence ... Poland was to emerge with its own artistic traditions, invigorated by association with above all German and Russian influences, but distinct because it drew upon its own inspirations. In the cultural sense Poland existed. In the political sense it was necessary to create it."

98

As we have seen, Mao Tun did indeed take inspiration from the Polish achievement of forging a cultural identity for itself while politically it did not exist. However what use was a 'silent victory'? For Mao Tun it was no victory at all until it was translated into tangible results.<sup>99</sup> Once achieved this national self-confidence had to be consolidated and expanded into the extra-literary sphere,

not allowed to become dissipated and in danger of 'losing itself in cosmopolitan universalism'.<sup>100</sup>

In 1922 in 'Literature and Political Society' his vague remarks about Norway, "the guiding spirit" of whose literature changed after political independence from Sweden was achieved,<sup>101</sup> can serve as an endorsement of his consistent advocacy of particularism within universalism in the context of literary evolution. For although Mao Tun did not elucidate further the nature of this change, the assumption appears to be that a further, even more advanced stage of literary development would proceed, in accordance with his belief in the evolution of literature and its capacity for continual self-improvement. In post-war world literature he saw the trend as being one of neo-realism,<sup>102</sup> which necessarily was the way forward for literature for one who believed in literary evolution. It was important for all small and weak countries to join the mainstream of world literature, to make their own contribution to it and even play a leading role, as Poland had done. However the case of Poland by 1929 seemed to indicate that the only way to maintain a position in the world at large was 'via the province',<sup>103</sup> as Mao Tun had maintained since late 1921 - early 1922. It also endorses the conclusion above regarding the secondary importance of the socio-political background.

Endre Galla in her article 'On the Reception of the Literatures of the So-called "Oppressed Nations" in Modern Chinese Literature',<sup>104</sup> asserts that Mao Tun

'...was not interested in the artistic-aesthetic features of these literatures ... [which] ... could be studied better and more profitably in the major Western literatures...'

but 'he expected a moral-ideological support from these literatures ...',<sup>105</sup> It is clear that Mao Tun did look to Polish and other such literatures for moral-ideological support especially in the light of his concern for the socio-political background and its relation to literature. As quoted above,<sup>106</sup> in the article 'Duties and Efforts...' Mao Tun wrote: "The task of making Western literature accessible is to introduce its literary art and contemporary world thinking. To this last aim more attention must be paid".<sup>107</sup> It has already been suggested that this statement indicates a tendency towards the subordination of artistic and aesthetic concerns to ideological ones, however it by no means precludes the former.

Artistic concerns are the second motivating factor in Mao Tun's selection from the literature of oppressed peoples. In Part I it was shown how Mao Tun emphasized the need to express national identity and consciousness through a portrayal of one's people and social background. The importance which Mao Tun accorded to the link between this and naturalistic description, and his advocacy of naturalism as the means to expedite the progress of Chinese literature along the evolutionary path of world literature have both also been established in Part I. In this context it is not surprising to discover that he carefully chose from among the writers of small and/or oppressed nations, those whom he considered to be the best examples for Chinese writers to follow. The rationale behind his choice can be seen not only in the writers he selected, but in whom he omitted. In this case Mao Tun only selected one Polish writer for particular study. If he was concerned with ideological questions alone perhaps he would have chosen the Romantic patriotic poet Mickiewicz, recognized as the leader of the Polish romantic period, especially when one considers that the Polish romantic

movement was the main inspiration behind the insurrections of 1830-1 and 1863.<sup>108</sup>

Instead Mao Tun chose the novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz, whose works accord in general aesthetic terms with Mao Tun's convictions at the time, that is February 1921, when he looked to a combination of observation and imagination, which he found in neo-romanticism.<sup>109</sup> Bonnie McDougall states that Mao Tun's article 'Poland's Present Day Notable Writer Sienkiewicz' is a translation of a chapter of W.H. Phelps' 'Essays on Modern Novelists'.<sup>110</sup> It is correct that the article is based on that in Phelps entitled 'Henryk Sienkiewicz'. However, the places where Mao Tun deviated from the original chapter (which is incidentally unacknowledged) indicate the view of Sienkiewicz which he wished to present. This view does not concur totally with that of Phelps, but it does coincide completely with Mao Tun's conception at the time of the complexion of the new Chinese literature, which tended towards 'neo-romanticism' as he defined it. It is clear that Mao Tun has used other sources of information - either the results of his own investigations or other works - for his article, as publishing details and dates of English translations, original Polish titles and so on are not furnished by Phelps. Thus one cannot be certain that the views expressed which differ from those of Phelps are Mao Tun's own. However I suggest that they are because they coincide so fully with his stated views at the time.

Firstly, Mao Tun provided his own introductory paragraph.<sup>111</sup> This paragraph reveals, as we have seen, his priorities regarding the process of selection of an author as relevant to his guidelines for the

development of Chinese literature: a literature should be national in character; an adverse political background is no bar to an important role in world literature; literature should "express the life and ideals" of the writer's own people - the writer should remain faithful to his own social background, literature should be written in the language of the people. The issues involved are precisely those which he had identified as paramount in the contemporary Chinese literary scene. Mao Tun continued:

"Regarding Henryk Sienkiewicz, I feel there are two heavy responsibilities on his shoulders: on the one hand he is the leader of a newly-arisen national literature, on the other he is one who advances world literature." 112

Although he wrote "I feel", suggesting a personal opinion, such a statement can logically be drawn from the first two pages of the Phelps chapter. Nevertheless, that such a pioneering spirit both in the national literary context and in terms of world literature coincides so precisely with Mao Tun's prescriptions for new Chinese writers, suggests that he deliberately chose to introduce Sienkiewicz in this way. The text goes on to express a view missing from Phelps, and yet consistent with Mao Tun's views at the time:

"His greatness..is in his ability to combine the spirit of romanticism and realism and portray the life of mankind, to give voice to mankind's supplications (喊出人類的奮鬥求) with idealism and conviction." 113

The same call to temper the stark realities of realistic(or naturalistic) description with the imagination is echoed here.

Mao Tun totally rearranged the content of Phelps' chapter to suit his own purposes, retaining intact that with which he agreed, and making adaptations or introducing additions where he wished in accordance with his own views. Of Sienkiewicz's historical novels

Mao Tun wrote:

"With regard to these historical novels, although the material is taken from the history of Poland's seventeenth century wars with such peoples as Cossaks, Turks and Swedes, the main intention of this portrayal is not the history of the wars at that time, but the society of that time." 114

Compare Phelps:

'One reason for this immensity is the author's desire to be historically accurate, the besetting sin of many recent dramas and novels. Before beginning to write, Sienkiewicz reads all the authorities and documentary evidence he can find. The result is plainly seen in the early pages of 'With Fire and Sword', which read far more like a history than like a work of fiction.' 115

Mao Tun writes: "'Fire and Sword' is definitely not a history but a novel".<sup>116</sup> (火與劍決不是歷史，是小說) A characteristic addition is that of the following sentence to a discussion of Sienkiewicz's graphic description of the horrors of life:

"The description of sombre and anguishing circumstances in his books does not cause down-heartedness [in the reader], on the contrary one's anger is aroused." 117

The reaction of the reader was very important to Mao Tun, who elsewhere asserts that the function of literature is to "move men" (動人<sup>118</sup> or 感人<sup>119</sup>). As this was not clearly brought out by Phelps, Mao Tun felt the need of greater emphasis. At the same time he was perfectly satisfied with Phelps' evaluation of Sienkiewicz's portrayal of 'the character of the hero made perfect through suffering',<sup>120</sup> retaining it without alteration.

Mao Tun had already indicated Sienkiewicz's pioneering spirit as being exemplary for Chinese writers, and in the next paragraph he links this with the realistic nature of his works: "His 'Children of the Soil' and 'Without Dogma' are in fact the earliest realistic novels in Polish literature".<sup>121</sup> This information is not to be found in

Phelps' chapter and thus indicates Mao Tun's own preoccupation. Another interesting adaptation of the text is Mao Tun's direct linking of Sienkiewicz's Christian moral stand with objective description, which is not done by Phelps, who is concerned with Sienkiewicz's moral attitude towards his characters. It appears that Mao Tun wished to make use of the extract from Sienkiewicz's essay on Zola, quoted by Phelps, which followed, but the issue of Christianity was not centrally relevant to his argument, so he focussed away from it and on to that of objective description which was of far greater concern to him:

"The novel 'Children of the Soul' in fact has a Christian moral viewpoint as its basis. As for pure objective description, he does not particularly endorse it. He believes the novel should positively help to establish a healthy Weltanschauung (人生觀) in life; it ought to introduce a description of the good aspects of human life, not only the evil ones."

122

Compare Phelps:

'The foundations of his art are set deep in the bedrock of moral ideas. As Tolstoy would say, he has the right attitude towards his characters. He believes that the novel should strengthen life, not undermine it; ennoble, not defile it; for it is good tidings not evil.'

123

Here, Mao Tun simply inserted reference to objective description and the need to mellow it into Phelps' text on Sienkiewicz's moral attitude, thereby relating the whole of the second part of the excerpt to objective description, instead of to moral attitude.

This is not to say that Mao Tun does not concern himself with the question of Sienkiewicz's attitude:

"...underneath the surface of misery there lies a definite and completely different essential thought, namely 'love', the 'love' of mankind. He himself said that love is the complete basis of literature."

124

Irene Eber also makes this point,<sup>125</sup> however she fails to realize that Mao Tun had made a direct translation from Phelps, who wrote:

'Love in all its forms appears in these Polish novels ... Love, says Sienkiewicz, with perhaps more force than clearness, should be the foundation of all literature.' 126

The difference is that Phelps is referring to a 'Christian conception of love' whereas Mao Tun omits any reference to Christianity, indicating a humanistic approach. When the two articles coincide the difficulty is to distinguish Mao Tun's own views from those of Phelps. It seems that Mao Tun made no acknowledgement to Phelps because he wished to put across his own views on Sienkiewicz, not those of Phelps. It would appear that Mao Tun independently formulated his own appraisal of Sienkiewicz's work,<sup>127</sup> and, personally finding him exceedingly suitable to promote as an example for Chinese writers to follow, was content to make use of an essay such as Phelps' as the basis for an article. He made use of Phelps' turns of phrase and skill in evaluating Sienkiewicz's technique instead of composing his own text to express the same kind of ideas.<sup>128</sup> So where there is comparison made in Mao Tun's article between Shakespeare's Falstaff and Sienkiewicz's Zagloba, between his moral attitude and that of Tolstoy, and so on, (which are all taken from Phelps' article), Mao Tun uses them without acknowledgement because they serve to reinforce his own arguments, concurring as they did with his own views. Thus it can be seen that in fact Mao Tun's article cannot properly be called a translation of Phelps' chapter. Mao Tun engaged in extensive plagiarism and totally rearranged the content of the original article, even taking single sentences out of their original context. However the issue is not the rights and wrongs of plagiarism (although this detailed investigation of one critic's behaviour towards the work of others



might well, unfortunately, be typical of the period), for through Mao Tun's adaptation and total rearrangement of the original work, he makes the work his own. After taking due account of views which he expresses but which are not originally his, the article may be evaluated in terms of Mao Tun's own attitudes towards the introduction of the literature of small and oppressed countries and his aspirations for the New Chinese Literature.

It is Sienkiewicz's epic novels which are particularly examined in this article, a genre which played a central role in maintaining Polish patriotic traditions. According to R.F. Leslie, a positive effect of partition was the duty felt by educated Poles to 'establish for a country which did not exist in international law an identity which all could recognize'.<sup>129</sup> To this end the role of historians was important, emphasizing the past achievements of Poland. The epic novels of Sienkiewicz should be seen in this context, but as Mao Tun pointed out, in his works, Sienkiewicz was not oblivious to the social problems of the day. Under conditions of severe censorship, various devices had to be used if works were to express social criticism. At this time in China, the general tendency had been a total rejection of China's past - this is reflected in Mao Tun's own articles. However when Cheng Chen-to replaced Mao Tun as editor of HSYF, he encouraged a greater interest in China's literary past and its relevance for the present. Indeed, Mao Tun himself worked in the Department of Old Chinese Literature of the Commercial Press from 1923 until the end of 1925.<sup>130</sup> It is impossible to quantify the influence of Poland and other oppressed countries who looked to the past for an expression of national identity in this respect.

In his discussion of Polish literature Mao Tun also noted the importance of the "expression of the thoughts and lives of (one's) own people in (one's) own language".<sup>131</sup> This was of particular relevance for Poles when the Polish language was suppressed in both Prussian and Russian Poland, and even in Austrian Poland where the language had been allowed to exist, the influence of ultra-conservative elements (loyal to Austria) was so strong that the universities of Cracow and Lwow, which offered education in Polish, and which could have been centres of nationalistic expression, were inevitably stifled.<sup>132</sup> As far as China was concerned, Irene Eber has pointed out that because the works of oppressed people were for the most part written in lively everyday speech they provided excellent examples of what the Chinese were seeking to achieve, that is 'the use of the vernacular as a literary medium'.<sup>133</sup> She also notes the importance of the opportunity provided by translation to 'develop the spoken language as a literary tool'.<sup>134</sup> This underlines the significance of the situation in China where the writers were also the translators. (Further reference to the issue of language below).

## (2) Hungarian Literature

Work devoted to Hungarian literature by Mao Tun in HSYF consists of translations of one work each by Andreas Latzko,<sup>135</sup> John Arányi<sup>136</sup> and Mikzách,<sup>137</sup> two by Molnár<sup>138</sup> and an article entitled 'The Hundredth Anniversary of Hungary's Patriotic Poet Petöfi'.<sup>139</sup> These appeared between 1921 and 1925. Reference to Hungary is also to be found in 'The Social Background and Creation',<sup>140</sup> and 'Literature and Political Society',<sup>141</sup> (September 1922). These two articles indicate

a basic general understanding of Hungary's social and political background on Mao Tun's part. Here is a brief summary.

After the defeat of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Ottoman Empire a tripartite division of Hungary was effected in 1540 between the House of Habsburg, the Turks and the precariously independent principality of Transylvania. After the prolonged War of Liberation (1683-99) the armies of the Catholic alliance expelled the Turks and reunited the country, including Protestant Transylvania, under Habsburg rule. In protest at the persecution of Protestants a Transylvanian-led peasant rebellion broke out in 1703 - the War of Independence, which ended with the Habsburgs victorious. Nevertheless Hungary's constitutional autonomy and identity within a customs frontier were recognized, whilst the head of the House of Habsburg was to rule Hungary not as Emperor but as King of Hungary - with the aid of an indigenous officialdom.<sup>142</sup> Thus Hungary became a sort of colony in the growing Austrian Empire, regarded as an inexhaustible source of natural wealth and cheap agricultural goods. The economy of Hungary simply stagnated. After the Napoleonic wars there was a gradual realization of Hungary's backwardness compared to the advanced European countries, especially among combatants who had returned from France, and guardsmen in Vienna.<sup>143</sup> Not only was Hungary impoverished, it was an intellectual desert.<sup>144</sup> Attention began to be paid to the cultivation of native Hungarian, the language of the common people who alone had come to be the trustees of Hungarian culture. The upper classes and aristocracy had long since been on the verge of losing their Hungarian identity, not only adopting foreign culture, but despising their native language, they spoke several foreign languages instead and travelled widely.

But many felt obliged to relearn their half-forgotten native tongue as a patriotic gesture, and thereby the emergence of a national identity was accelerated. Magyar replaced Latin in schools, higher education establishments and scholarly works, and in 1844 it became the official language.<sup>145</sup> Resentment at Hungary's colonial dependence on Austria increased especially among a new, impoverished generation of gentry whom economic hardship had forced to turn to education as a means to a career. The modern French concept of 'nation state' inspired them to a new awareness of their ethnic identity especially when the whole bourgeoisie and half the aristocracy were non-Magyar.<sup>146</sup> The accompanying growth of literature especially with the rise of the romantic movement provided further inspiration in the quest for national identity, namely the investigation of Hungary's distant heroic past.<sup>147</sup> Pent up resentment towards Austria was finally translated into action with the revolution of 1848. Hungarian independence was declared, but was soon crushed by the Russian armies which came to Austria's aid. There followed twenty years of direct rule from Austria: Hungary was completely incorporated into the Austrian Empire; German became the official language; and anything remotely Hungarian in nature, such as national dress, was banned.<sup>148</sup> Hungarian intellectual life was also crushed because of its links with the rebellion. After the restoration of the constitution in 1867 there developed a false sense of security until the First World War (this was encouraged by the decay of the Austrian Empire from which more concessions were gained). Gradual industrialization promoted the growth of fine new cities and the stabilization of conservative middle-class values. Urban social problems and peasant poverty were ignored except by intellectuals who felt themselves alienated

at Hungary's pretense of a Western culture whilst a non-Western backward social reality still remained.<sup>149</sup> Their response was to promote education and politicization of the masses, which eventually led to the short-lived socialist revolution in 1918.

In this historical summary the question of language is deliberately emphasized because of its intrinsic significance with regard to the rise of national consciousness in Hungary. Whereas in Poland, Polish language and ethnic identity were directly suppressed from without, in Hungary such suppression came from within, from the very nature of her backward society: official business was conducted in Latin, the aristocracy were Europeanized and the common people were of no consequence. Polish consciousness can be seen to have arisen in direct response to openly hostile treatment. However national consciousness among the Hungarians arose from within and was therefore all the stronger. Undeniably centuries of foreign domination had led to apathy and the rejection of Hungarian identity, yet the resentment felt towards Austria was not a result of direct oppression as in the case of Poland, but for its allowing Hungary to degenerate to such a state. Comparison with the advanced European nations appealed first to the Hungarian's sense of shame, his anger was vented on Austria because there was no other party to put the blame on. Mao Tun does seem to have been generally aware of the underlying causes of this phenomenon<sup>150</sup> but not necessarily its links with language, nevertheless its reflection in literature attracted him strongly.

This attraction explains Mao Tun's interest in the two Hungarian romantic poets Arany and Petofi. The motivating factors which



determined his choice of particular writers for study have to be evaluated in the context of the literary background of the particular country or people under consideration - such generalizations as that of Endre Galla grossly oversimplify the issue. Thus, although certain conclusions may be drawn with respect to Mao Tun's choice of, for example, Sienkiewicz rather than Mickiewicz in the context of Polish literature, they are only valid in that context. A general understanding of the Hungarian literary context is therefore essential in the investigation of his interest in two Romantic poets.

As Hungarian intellectual life was almost completely crushed after the suppression of the 1848-9 revolution, the main type of literature produced after this time was the escapist writing to which Hungary turned in her despondency under direct Austrian rule. It was not until the latter part of the 19th century that a trend toward realistic writing developed, therefore Arány and Petöfi have an exceedingly prominent position in Hungarian literature because of the dearth of other writers of worth - until several decades later.

It is evident that, in Galla's words, Mao Tun sought 'moral-ideological support' from their work, captivated, as he seems to have been, by their extraordinary sense of national consciousness and patriotism, which he felt was lacking in China. This concern is expressed for example in the article 'The Duties and Efforts of Researchers of the New Literature' which criticizes new Chinese writers for producing superficial imitations of Western literary works which are not supported by genuine experiences from life. Of course such works lacked individuality and failed to express national character.

His brief reference to three Hungarian romantic poets in the article

'The Social Background and Creation' is also pertinent here:

"The poems of J. Arány, A. Petöfi and M. Vörösmarty are full of a love for the ancient culture of their Motherland, and of patriotism even surpassing thoughts of sympathy for the oppressed; this is a result of the particular conditions within the country." 151

In his articles on both Arány and Petöfi, it is clear that what appeals to Mao Tun is their "portrayal of the genuine Hungarian character".<sup>152</sup> He was not seeking an 'artístico-aesthetic example' from their work, indeed in his article on Petöfi he made various criticisms of his romantic style:

"He is too subjective, and does not consider it appropriate to narrate facts without the slightest bias. Whatever they say, the characters in his narrative poems all flow from the heart of Petöfi." 153

In the following paragraph he continues:

"Petöfi's last great narrative poem, 'The Apostle', is a series of factual descriptions - although it is brave description it is somewhat hyperbolic." 154

Such criticisms should be understood in the light of Mao Tun's own professed advocacy of objective description and realistic portrayal in the context of his own brand of naturalism/realism. However, they constitute a small part of the article as a whole, which is mainly concerned with the two main themes of his poems - 'love and liberty'.<sup>155</sup> But first he gave a brief summary of Petöfi's life. He particularly seemed to emphasize Petöfi's humble origins and the suffering which he endured. The actual life experience of writers was of concern to Mao Tun in his prescriptions to young aspiring Chinese writers; it is quite likely that Mao Tun wished indirectly to impress upon his readership the importance of writing from experience. This concern is expressed in 'A Criticism of the Creative Works of April, May and

June,<sup>156</sup> where writers are criticized for writing about the working classes without having any knowledge or experience of the conditions of life of such people. However "Petöfi's world view was based on a passionate faith in the common people"<sup>157</sup> and as such was exemplary for China. An expression of this faith can be seen in his "János Vitéz"<sup>158</sup>, the details of which Mao Tun gave as follows:

"His most famous narrative poem 'János Vitéz [sic] was written in only two weeks in a small dark room when he was twenty-one years old. The basis for this narrative poem was a current Hungarian folk story, the main protagonist of which was a young peasant lad, a shepherd lad, who later joined the army. Petöfi turned the handed down prosaic formulae into extremely fluent and natural verse, following a ballad form."

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It is clear from this brief discussion that Mao Tun's main concern here was one other than language because he neglects to make much of Petöfi's achievement, generally acknowledged in 'János Vitéz' of 'bringing poetic diction closer to the natural idiom of the spoken language'.<sup>160</sup> Therefore let us return to the twin themes of 'love and liberty' with which this article is primarily concerned, and which lent to the figure of Petöfi a both national and universal appeal.

The image of a national poet-hero who gives his life 'fighting for the freedom of his people',<sup>161</sup> on the battlefield of revolution is an irresistible one, all the more so for Mao Tun as an image of extreme commitment to life on the part of the artist. Mao Tun quoted Petöfi's celebrated line which encapsulated this:

'Liberty, and love! These two I need. For my love  
I will sacrifice life, for liberty I will sacrifice  
my love.'

162

He also quotes at length from the poem 'One thought torments me ...'

( 只有一個念頭使我煩惱 ) which expresses passionately and



eloquently Petöfi's further concern for all the oppressed people of the world .

'... Wait till the slave generations are unchained  
and tired of chains take to arms,  
their faces flushed, their banners red  
and on their banners the slogan spelled  
FREEDOM FOR THE WORLD ( 為全世界的自由而戰呵! )  
and the words are called  
loudly, they call them from East to West  
till tyrants think battle is best.' 163

The length of the quotation alone indicates the extent of Mao Tun's interest in the ideas expressed within it, and the concluding lines of the article reinforce this impression:

"He is a Hungarian patriotic poet, but on reading his verse one does not see a Petöfi who loves Hungary [in particular], only one who loves mankind and who loves freedom remains." 164

Similar concerns inform the brief summary of the life and works of Arány appended to a translation of Arány's 'Bor the Hero'. Mao Tun writes:

"The special characteristic of Arány's works is his ability to recreate the real genuine Hungarian character. One need look no further than [the work] 'Toldi'; how could Toldi kill a man in anger, and afterwards confess? What kind of magnanimous and dignified spirit is this? His loyalty to his lord, his filial piety towards his mother, as well as his gentlemanliness with women he loved and with his old servant, all reveal him to be wise, brave and benevolent in every way. But in fact such fine qualities are not peculiar to Hungarians, all mankind has a certain amount." 165

Once again there is universal appeal in the portrayal of the particular. However Mao Tun did not undertake a special study of Arány, Mikzáth, Molnár or Latzko, simply appending a brief introduction to the life and works of each author to his translation of their work. He also only made one translation from the works of each (two from Molnár), which suggests that there were other criteria involved in the selection of a particular work beyond the literary stance of the author. Irene Eber in her general study of works by authors of small and

oppressed countries translated into Chinese has identified 'specific categories of themes' into which these works may be divided and uses this as a basis to evaluate wider criteria. She found that:

'...the largest category is of themes that deal with social and political issues ... A second category deals broadly with reflections on life and philosophical issues ... A third category consists of translations of folk tales ...'

She has also pointed out that 'the theme of love was barely represented' except 'love as suffering'.<sup>166</sup> It is probably useful to be aware of these findings especially as the work of Mao Tun was included in the material consulted. However such general conclusions cannot be directly applied to the work of an individual translator without reference to other factors.

The case of Mao Tun's translation of Arány's 'Bor the Hero' does pose something of a problem regarding motives for selection. As far as I can see this is the only work by Arány translated in HSYF from 1921-29; this suggests that Mao Tun considered it a representative example of Arány's work as whole, and therefore an incentive to readers to read a longer work by him, such as the Toldi trilogy. In this particular case he does not give any reasons for his choice. Arány's ballads, of which this one, mostly 'had as their subject the mental torments caused by grave crimes',<sup>167</sup> and are considered 'unparalleled in virtuosity in Hungarian literature'.<sup>168</sup> Czigány continues:

"In Arány's ballads crime is punished by insanity, and madness always has a psychological explanation ... Arány was able to present dark passions in his ballads, a nightmare world strangely missing from the rest of his poetry."

169

It is quite possible that this type of psychological portrayal appealed to Mao Tun, perhaps as an expression of Hungary's and Arány's

dejection after the failure of the 1848 uprising. He writes:

"Petöfi died young, but Arány lived for a long time; because of this Petöfi did not come to see Hungary's period of dejection, however Arány personally experienced it. He saw with his own eyes Hungary's idealistic sons establish a revolutionary army and he saw them fail, and he saw his good friend Petöfi die on the battlefield; even if he wanted to be optimistic he could not be ..."

170

He also suffered tragedy in his private life, which Mao Tun also mentioned, and his melancholy, although usually restrained, found its way into his ballads. This ballad tells of the agonies of the 'hero' who killed his lover and was haunted by her memory, driven finally to taking his own life to 'rejoin' her. However this does not appear to be a portrayal of the "genuine Hungarian character", as Toldi was, except as a reflection of widespread melancholy. It fits better into Eber's category of 'love as suffering', but for Mao Tun to have chosen a work on this basis would have been totally inconsistent with his stated views.

His short introduction to the life and works of Mikz'ath on the contrary gives adequate indication of the reasons for this choice. Firstly, in a direct quotation from another source<sup>171</sup> he wrote:

"Mikz'ath had great power of observation and discovered the existence of things which attracted man's attention, and the poetic, even in the most simple environments of human existence ..."

172

From a second source he quoted the following:

"... his characters are rich and varied, within the limitations of his canvas we see the whole of Hungary pass before our eyes: the gentry, the petite bourgeoisie, the clergy, politicians and peasants ..."

173

Mao Tun's extensive acknowledged reference to other sources indicates a lack of first-hand knowledge of Mikz'ath's life and works; however, both Mikz'ath's skills of observation and his ability to portray the whole of Hungarian society would have struck a chord in Mao Tun.

Mao Tun also seemed to be impressed by his humour and patriotism, as his own explanation for choosing this particular work for translation indicates:

"Hungarian literary men were all patriots; this work 'Travel to Another World' also reveals deep patriotic feelings expressed through humour. It is unfortunate that my inferior translation cannot adequately express his sharp and biting humour."

174

Mikzáth belonged to the second generation of Hungarian writers, influenced by the advent of realism. Although his early work was tempered with romanticism,

"... towards the end of the century he became more realistic as a writer of everyday life, which he described with understanding and sympathy, although he did not hesitate to pillory the shortcomings of society with sharp-witted satire."

175

Mikzáth's celebrated novel 'The Young Nosty's Affair with Mary Toth' would have been a fine example of his later work to recommend to the Chinese readership, but it is plain that Mao Tun's knowledge of Mikzáth did not extend that far. The likelihood is that the individual story caught Mao Tun's attention for the reasons he himself indicated; and after a certain amount of research into the background of the author, the story seemed doubly suitable for translation, both on its own merits, and as a representative work of Mikzáth, whose literary stance was in sympathy with his own.

Mao Tun's brief introduction to Molnár, appended to a translation of his 'Smart Set', is not taken from an acknowledged source, suggesting a greater knowledge of his subject. This impression is reinforced by the fact that Mao Tun made a second translation from Molnár's work three years later, published in June 1925, which shows something of a sustained interest. Of Molnár Mao Tun wrote:

"He belongs to the realistic school of writers, but does not remain completely within the sphere of realism. His imagination often extends into a strange illusory spiritual world ... His humour is sharp to the point of coldness; his observation goes deep into the flesh, and is not diverted by subjectivity. He peels back the superficiality of man's actions and probes his innermost being, but all he finds is desire. Thus from his positive perspective it is extremely difficult to judge from their behaviour whether people are good or bad ... If one asks their motivation, it is always selfishness, they have never had a sense of right or wrong ... Molnár saw very little difference between a thief and a sage."

176

Once again the Hungarian probing into man's psychology attracts Mao Tun, which is especially relevant when one recalls his criticism of the sentimentality and superficiality of character portrayal in contemporary Chinese literature. Molnár's objective descriptive technique is also basically consistent with Mao Tun's own views, however Molnár tended not to use his plays as a vehicle for social criticism. He refused to make judgements, preferring only to explore the depths of individuals and their interrelationships. As we have seen, for Mao Tun the whole concept of objective description was inextricably linked with commitment to political and social issues, therefore in these terms Mao Tun can be seen to have made some concessions in his translations of two of Molnár's plays. In this case the emphasis would appear to be upon Molnár's treatment of characters, especially as Mao Tun's appraisal is concerned primarily with this aspect of his work. Neither did wanderings into the supernatural world figure prominently in Mao Tun's literary scheme of things, as they bore little relation to the precept 'literature is a reflection of the social background'. However at the time this translation was published, Mao Tun was still expressing an ultimate sympathy for what he termed 'neo-romanticism', which according to his own definition would allow the imagination more play. Nevertheless to extend this

line of reasoning much further would be mere speculation.

One point which seems to have influenced Mao Tun's choice of works by Molnár for translation is the contemporary popularity of his plays in Hungary, the rest of Europe and even America. Part of his reason for translating the two plays probably was a concern that China should always remain au courant with the world literary scene. It is initially puzzling that Mao Tun did not translate any of Molnár's short stories, of which he wrote:

"Molnár is famous as a playwright but his short stories are also among the best works in Hungarian literature."

177

The reason why Mao Tun unhesitatingly made such a contentious assertion would appear to be the direct correlation between these short stories and Mao Tun's own literary views. Czigány writes:

'While his plays contained less and less social criticism as the years went by, Molnár's short stories revealed a social conscience ... and showed him an outspoken critic of urban poverty.'

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However the work of translation of Molnár's short stories was left to Mao Tun's brother Shen Tse-min, who published two such translations in HSYF in October 1922 and March 1923.

The final Hungarian writer from whose work Mao Tun made a translation was Andreas Latzko. In the short accompanying introductory article Mao Tun reveals a different kind of motivation for this choice:

"The war novels of worth - perhaps of lasting worth - produced after the war, such as Barbusse's 'L'Enfer' or Latzko's work 'Men in the War' (戰中的人) all depict the agonies of men on the battlefield ... [and] analytically describe the causes of this great calamity and the reasons why mankind cannot prevent it; the reason why I have translated this work is because China has not translated